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Bharat Bandh on SC quota order hits Bihar & tribal belts

It saw peaceful protests with sporadic incidents of violence

NEW DELHI/PATNA, 21 AUG

The daylong nationwide strike called by some Dalit and Adivasi groups against the Supreme Court's verdict on the sub-classification of Scheduled Castes affected normal life in Bihar and Jharkhand as well as tribal areas of various states.

The response was tepid in other parts of the country even as several INDIA bloc parties as well as other non-BJP outfits extended their support to the bandh.

The Chhattisgarh unit of the Congress said the government should consider the "legitimate demands" of the protesters sympathetically. However, the BJP's prominent tribal leader Faggan Singh Kulaste accused the opposition of politicising the Supreme Court's ruling on the issue.

Twenty-one organisations across the country had called for the Bharat Bandh against the apex court's order, which they said would harm the basic principles of reservation.

The RJD and other partners of the INDIA bloc extended their support to the bandh. Independent MP Rajesh Ranjan alias Pappu Yadav, led demonstrations in Patna and other areas, criticising the NDA government's stance on SC/ST quota and alleging that it wants to undermine reservations.

In Patna, police chased away crowds who blocked traffic at Dak Bungalow Chowk. Some protesters tried to set a school bus on fire in Bihar, with kids inside the bus. Chief Minister Hemant Soren has cancelled his visit to Palamu on Wednesday due to the strike, an official said, adding security was bolstered at key locations to prevent any untoward incident.

"We are not protesting the top court's verdict. We hit the streets to protect our rights provided by the Constitution," said Adivasi Jan Parishad president Prem Sahi Munda.

Rail and road communications were partially affected in Odisha but government offices, banks, business establishments and educational institutions functioned normally.

The call for the strike evoked a mixed response in Chhattisgarh, barring its tribal-dominated areas. Transport services largely remained unaffected in the rest of the state.

Other northern states, including Rajasthan, Punjab and Haryana, remained largely unaffected, barring a few places where markets remained closed and public transport services were partially affected.

The bandh had no impact in Assam where schools, offices and business establishments functioned normally with almost full attendance across the state. —*PTI*

Police personnel lathicharge protesters during the 'Bharat Bandh' called by SC/ST organisations over reservation issue, in Patna, on Wednesday; Adivasi Chatra Sangh protest near the CM House in Ranchi **PHOTO: PTI**

- The bandh had no impact in Assam where schools, offices and business establishments functioned normally with almost full attendance across the state

1ST VISIT BY PM IN 45 YRS

PM arrives in Poland for 2-day visit

NEW DELHI, 21 AUG

Shortly before he embarked on a two-nation visit of Poland and Ukraine, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said he was looking forward to sharing perspectives with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on a peaceful resolution of the Ukraine conflict.

People familiar with preparations for Modi's trip to Ukraine said he is expected to have a "candid" conversation with Zelenskyy and the ongoing conflict will form a major part of the discussion.

His visit to Kyiv comes nearly six weeks after his high-profile trip to Moscow during which he held extensive talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin on ending the ongoing conflict.

It is expected that during talks in Kyiv, the Indian side would refer to its talks with President Putin last month as part of overall efforts to help passing messages between the two sides, the people cited above said. Modi will be in Kyiv for around seven hours on Friday in the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Ukraine since the country became independent in 1991.

Meanwhile, Moscow came under one of the largest attacks yet by Ukrainian drones since the start of fighting in 2022, Russian authorities reported Wednesday, saying they destroyed all of those headed toward the capital.

—*PTI*

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi with officials in Warsaw, Poland, on Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

IAF jet drops unidentified object near Pokhran

JAIPUR, 21 AUG

An object fell from an IAF fighter aircraft in the Pokhran area of Rajasthan's Jaisalmer district on Wednesday. The incident occurred in an isolated area and there was no damage to life or property, authorities said. "An inadvertent release of an air store from an Indian Air Force (IAF) fighter aircraft took place near Pokhran firing range area, due to technical malfunction, today," the Indian Air Force (IAF) posted on X. IAF did not reveal the exact nature of the object. Sub-Inspector of Ramdevra police station Shankar Lal said some people heard a loud bang about a kilometre away from the village following which they rushed to the spot. —*PTI*

A man injured after a fire broke out following an explosion in a reactor pharma unit, in Anakapalle, Andhra Pradesh on Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

Fire breaks out at Andhra pharma unit, 17 dead

ATCHUTAPURAM, 21 AUG

The death toll in the fire accident at a pharmaceutical unit here on Wednesday rose to 17, officials said.

Anakapalli District Collector Vijaya Krishnan said the fire broke out at 2.15pm at Escientia Advanced Sciences Pvt Ltd at Atchutapuram in Anakapalli district.

"The factory operates with 381 employees in two shifts. The blast occurred during lunch time. Therefore, staff presence was less, Krishnan told PTI, adding that the explosion is suspected to be electricity-related.

As many as 33 injured people were shifted to different hospitals in Anakapalli and Atchutapuram while the Fire Department is engaged in rescue operations, deploying six fire tenders.

PHOTO: PTI

Further, the collector said 13 people trapped in the unit were rescued.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu expressed grief over the loss of lives.

He assured that the government will stand by the families of the workers who died, said an official press release.

—*PTI*

₹150cr for flood risk mitigation plan

NEW DELHI, 21 AUG

Centre has approved a Rs 150-crore glacial lake outburst flood risk mitigation programme to be implemented by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh. There are nearly 7,500 glacial lakes in the Indian Himalayas and the NDMA has finalised a list of 189 high-risk glacial lakes for mitigation measures to reduce the threat emanating from them, official sources said. The central government has approved the NDMA's National GLOF Risk Mitigation Programme amounting to Rs 150 crore for implementation in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh, the sources said. —*PTI*

Badlapur sexual assault: 300 FIRs registered, over 40 held

BADLAPUR, 21 AUG

Maharashtra Police has arrested more than 40 people and registered First Information Report (FIR) against 300 people following the massive protest over the alleged sexual assault of two minor girls in Badlapur, that led to stone-pelting, disruption of train services and lathi-charge on Tuesday.

The arrested people will be presented in court on Wednesday. Maharashtra police have also heightened the security at the railway station as police personnel have been deployed at the railway station to ensure no repetition of Tuesday's outbreak.

Internet services and schools remained shut on Wednesday in Badlapur and shops are ordered to remain closed. Section 144 imposed at the protest site also. The alleged sexual assault of two fourth-grade girls in Badlapur, Maharashtra by a school attended has sparked outrage. Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi on Wednesday called for a "Maharashtra bandh" on 24 August to protest against the alleged sexual assault. —*ANI/PTI*

NCP (SP) leader Supriya Sule and others during a protest over the Badlapur sexual abuse case, in Pune on Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

24-yr-old rapes 65-yr-old woman in Karnataka

CHINTAMANI, 21 AUG

A 24-year-old youth arrested for allegedly raping a 65- year-old woman in Chintamani, on Wednesday.

The accused has been identified as Irfan, 25, resident of Hyderali Nagar in Chintamani and the incident took place at around 2.30am in the hospital premises. According to Dr Santosh Kumar, Administrative Officer of General hospital, the incident took place near the oxygen plant in the compound. Santosh said the victim who resides in a nearby village probably had missed the bus to the village and was taking shelter near the shed.

—*Salar News*

Tribal woman gangraped in Ch'garh

RAIGARH, 21 AUG

A 27-year-old tribal woman was raped allegedly by six men in Raigarh district of Chhattisgarh, police said on Wednesday. The incident took place on Monday in a village under Pusaur police station area when the victim was on her way to visit a local fair after celebrating Rakshabandhan festival, a police official here said. As per the complaint, some people allegedly intercepted her and forcibly took her to the bank of a nearby pond and raped her there. —*PTI*

No lawyer for Kolkata rape accused

KOLKATA, 21 AUG

The process of conducting a polygraph test on Sanjoy Ray, a 33-year-old civic volunteer accused of raping and murdering a 31-year-old doctor at Kolkata's RG Kar Medical College and Hospital has been delayed due to the absence of legal representation for Ray. The district court in Sealdah granted permission for the test marking a critical step in verifying Ray's statements.

—*Agencies*

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ADR REPORT

151 MPs, MLAs accused of crimes against women

NEW DELHI, 21 AUG

As many as 151 sitting MPs and MLAs have declared cases related to crimes against women in their election affidavits, with West Bengal having the highest number of lawmakers facing such cases, according to a recent report by a poll rights body.

For the report, the Association for Democratic Reforms examined 4,693 out of 4,809 affidavits of sitting MPs and MLAs submitted to the Election Commission of India during elections between 2019 and 2024. The organisation identified 16 MPs and 135 MLAs facing cases related to crimes against women.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

West Bengal tops the list with 25 sitting MPs and MLAs facing charges related to crimes against women, followed by Andhra Pradesh with 21 and Odisha with 17, according to the report that comes amid the nationwide protests over the alleged rape and murder of a trainee doctor in a state-run hospital in Kolkata and sexual assault of two children in Thane. According to the report, there are 16 sitting MPs and MLAs who have declared cases related to rape under Indian Penal Code (IPC) section 376, which carries a minimum sentence of 10 years and can be extend to life imprisonment. Of these, two are MPs and 14 MLAs.

Charges include repeated offenses against the same victim, underscoring the gravity of these cases. Among political parties, BJP has the highest number of representatives (54 MPs and MLAs) with declared cases related to crimes against women, followed by Congress with 23 and Telugu Desam Party (TDP) with 17, according to the report.

Both BJP and Congress have five sitting lawmakers each facing rape charges. —*PTI*

ZOMATO TO OWN PAYTM INSIDER FOR RS 2,048 CR

NEW DELHI, 21 AUG

Online food delivery platform Zomato will acquire Paytm's entertainment ticketing business Paytm Insider for Rs 2,048 crore to strengthen its "going-out" segment in a deal that will help the troubled fintech firm to sharpen its focus on core payments and financial services distribution. Paytm Insider covers movies, sports, and events.

The boards of Zomato and One 97 Communications Ltd (OCL) have approved the all-cash deal. —*PTI*

Bullet-proof car for K'taka Governor amid protests

BENGALURU, 21 AUG

In the wake of violent statewide protests condemning Karnataka Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot's grant of permission to prosecute Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, the state constitutional head's security has been tightened, Raj Bhavan sources said on Wednesday. He has also started using a bullet-proof car since Tuesday morning.

"All the governors, by virtue of holding gubernatorial posts, are entitled to Z-plus security. Till now, the governor was not using it because he did not feel the need for it but now his security will be tightened," a source said hinting that Gehlot will be given Z-Plus security. The violent agitations against Gehlot shook various parts of the state, where people burnt the effigy of the governor. —*PTI*

Thaawarchand Gehlot **PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA**

PHOTO: ANI

Dakshina Kannada girl attacked by fellow student

MANGALURU, 21 AUG

In a shocking incident in Puttur, Dakshina Kannada, a girl was assaulted by a fellow student who reportedly had a crush on her. According to Superintendent of Police Yathish N, the attack occurred on Tuesday morning when the girl was on her way to college. The boy, known to the victim, approached her and, after his advances were rejected, attacked her with a weapon, injuring her hand. The victim is currently receiving treatment at the government hospital.

A case has been registered at the DK Women's Police Station under case number 42/2024, invoking sections 78, 126(2), 118(1), 238 BNS 2023, and section 12 of the POCSO Act.

—ANI

K'taka Bank, Navi Tech launch credit line on UPI

NEW DELHI, 21 AUG

Karnataka Bank and financial services company Navi Technologies have announced the launch of credit line on UPI, an offering by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI). The private sector lender will be offering credit lines through a strategic partnership with Navi, marking Karnataka Bank as one of the early adopters of this next-gen credit product. "This is currently offered to a closed group of select users who are pre-qualified for the product, and it will be launched to more users based on customer feedback," a release said. It further said the bank is starting with a short-term monthly loan product and is in discussions for adding other variants, like EMI facilities, and working capital credit lines in the future, aligned to customers evolving needs. Sekhar Rao, executive director of the bank, said by integrating a credit line directly into the UPI ecosystem, "we are making it easier than ever for our customers to access credit in a secure and convenient manner". *—PTI*

Cylinders explode in Shivamogga, no casualties

SHIVAMOGGA, 21 AUG

A fire broke out in a bakery at Ayanur in Shivamogga district following which two cylinders at the eatery exploded on Wednesday, police sources said. The incident occurred in the afternoon and no casualties were reported, they said. The fire brigade rushed to the spot and doused the fire. A short circuit in a refrigerator is suspected to be the cause of the fire. Two commercial gas cylinders blew up due to the blaze, the sources added. The video of the incident has gone viral in which people are seen running helter-skelter after the explosion. *—PTI*

Mysuru Prof selected for India Book of Records

MYSURU, 21 AUG

SA Mohan Krishna, Associate Professor, Department of Mechanical Engineering, Vidyavardhaka College of Engineering has been selected for India Book of Records. Being a faculty for 20 years in the College , his name has been selected for the highest number of National and International awards, research publications, highest number of membership in professional bodies, editorial board member for over 200 International Journals. He also delivered over 1000 talks, book publication, 2000 online certifications and published over 3000 scientific articles. The convocation is scheduled on 14 September at Faridabad, New Delhi, stated the release .

—Salar News

War of words breaks out between CM & HDK

Controversy is over Guv's sanction to prosecute Siddaramaiah

BENGALURU, 21 AUG

A war of words has broken out between Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy over the Lokayukta's Special Investigation Team (SIT) seeking Governor's sanction to prosecute the latter in an alleged illegal mining lease case.

Siddaramaiah told reporters at Ganigera in Koppal district on Wednesday that he has not said anywhere that Kumaraswamy would be arrested in connection with the case.

But the Chief Minister added: "If there is a circumstance (in connection with the case) to arrest him, we will arrest him without any hesitation. Such a circumstance is not there now. He is now scared that the Governor (Thaawarchand Gehlot) will give sanction,", the Chief Minister said. "If he is not scared, he would not have held a press meet today."

Siddaramaiah said that he has not said anywhere that Kumaraswamy would be arrested in connection with the mining case *PHOTOS: MOHAMMED ASAD/PTI*

Hitting back at the Chief Minister, Kumaraswamy told reporters here: "100 Siddaramaiahs should come (to arrest him). Do you think so (I am scared) when you see me?"

Responding to this, the Chief Minister said: "It's not 100 Siddaramaiahs....It's the police who arrest Kumaraswamy....not me...one constable is enough to arrest him. Even if 100 Siddarmaiahs come, arrest can't be made. I am not arresting... arrest is done by police."

Siddaramaiah charged the Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot with indulging in discrimination while approving prosecution sanction requests.

The SIT has once again submitted a proposal to the Governor on Monday seeking permission to file a chargesheet against Kumaraswamy in the alleged mining lease case.

The SIT had first requested Gehlot's nod in November last year to prosecute the Union Minister for Heavy Industries and Steel, who had allegedly granted mining lease to Sri Sai Venkateshwara Minerals when he was the Chief Minister in 2007 in violation of law.

The Chief Minister also dubbed Kumaraswamy a "hit and run case".

Siddaramaiah alleged that Kumaraswamy, a former Chief Minister, had levelled many allegations but not taken any of them to "logical end".

On Tuesday, Siddaramaiah had also said the Governor did not give permission to the Lokayukta to prosecute former BJP ministers Shashikala Jolle, Murugesh Nirani and G Janardhana Reddy.

Siddaramaiah has termed as "trumped-up" the allegations of irregularities in the allotment of sites to his wife Parvathi by the MUDA.

—PTI

TO EASE THE PROCESS

Single window to grant permission for Ganesha Chaturthi

BENGALURU, 21 AUG

- Organisers of Ganesha Pratishthan raised several suggestions and requests, including the need for suitable locations for idol immersions

Ahead of the upcoming Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations, the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) has announced the introduction of a streamlined "Single Window System" to simplify the process of obtaining permissions for festival activities. This system will be available at 63 sub-divisional offices across the City.

A special committee, comprising members from BBMP, the Police, BESCOM, and the Fire Department, will manage monitoring centres set up in these sub-divisional offices.

These centres will be easily accessible to the public, providing detailed information about nodal officers and efficiently addressing any festival-related queries.

Speaking to reporters on Wednesday, BBMP Chief Commissioner Tushar Girinath said, "This initiative aims to maintain law and order during the festival while ensuring the process is convenient for the public."

He reiterated the ban on Plaster of Paris (POP) Ganesha idols and encouraged citizens to use eco-friendly alternatives. He also outlined BBMP's plans for managing idol immersions, including deploying personnel at designated Kalyanis (water tanks) near lakes and arranging temporary mobile sewage units at key locations.

Organizers of Ganesha Pratishthan raised several suggestions and requests, including the need for suitable locations for idol immersions, additional security in sensitive areas, strict enforcement of the ban on POP idols, and ensuring that roads leading to procession sites are in good condition. *—Salar News*

Tejasvi Surya writes to DKS on traffic woes in Bengaluru

BENGALURU, 21 AUG

BJP MP Tejasvi Surya on Wednesday highlighted the traffic woes of Bengaluru city, saying that we are spending more time in mind-numbing traffic than with our family and loved ones.

He also called on Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar who is also Bengaluru incharge Minister to convene an urgent meeting with elected representatives and traffic management experts to address the issue.

According to the South Bengaluru MP, "The traffic scene in Bengaluru is getting more distressing every passing day. Even Sundays, which used to be relatively easier, is becoming as nightmarish as the weekdays."

Tejasvi Surya *PHOTO: PTI*

He said, "Every day, we are adding thousands of new private vehicles onto the roads which is only adding to the problem. Even running errands from neighbourhood stores takes so much time. The city roads, including the small lanes in residential areas, are way beyond its carrying capacity, and there is no space to make more roads. Anyway, more roads mean more private vehicles."

"Successive governments in the State, across parties, have failed to provide our wonderful city the vision and leadership that it deserves," the BJP MP added.

"Something drastic has to be done to address this. And it needs to be done NOW, with warlike urgency. In the long term, we need to double down on our investments and urgency on public transportation and drastically reduce private vehicles. Each person owing a private vehicle model will simply not work for a densely populated country like ours," Surya added. *—ANI*

Train timings revised at Yeshwanthpur station

BENGALURU, 21 AUG

South Western Railway has revised schedules of some trains due to the construction of air concourse at Yeshwanthpur Railway Station.

1. Train No. 06580, Tumakuru-Yeshwanthpur, which was earlier partially cancelled between Chikbanavar and Yeshwanthpur has now been restored to run up to Yeshwanthpur with revised arrival timings of 10am from 21 to 31 August and 1 to 19, September.

2. Train No. 06573, Yeswanthpur-Tumakuru, which was earlier partially cancelled between Yeshwanthpur and Chikbanavar, has been restored from Yeshwanthpur as per the scheduled time during the same dates.

PHOTO: PTI

3. Train No. 19302, KSR Bengaluru-Kuppam, will be partially cancelled between KSR Bengaluru and Krishnarajapuram from 21 to 31 August and 1 to 19 September. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: PTI

4 OF RAMJI NAGAR GANG HELD FOR THEFTS

BENGALURU, 21 AUG

Indiranagar police have arrested four members of Ramji Nagar gang hailing from Trichy in Tamil Nadu for stealing valuables, including laptops, from vehicles in Bengaluru.

Police recovered seven laptops and other valuables valued at Rs 5.85 lakh and also chilli powder and weapons from the gang which struck the City after three years.

The arrested are Murugan, 38, Senthil, 50, Murthy, 49 and John, 35, and two others part of the gang escaped the police net. The gang would keep a watch on parked cars and break the windshields and rob valuables such as laptops and mobile phones and sell them to John who was their main buyer of stolen goods, police said.

A police team went to Tamil Nadu to recover the weapons and John was nabbed near Attibele bus stop on 15 August.

In 2021, City police nabbed 11 members of the gang, following which 42 cases were solved. *—Salar News*

Pralhad Joshi to lay EV unit foundation in City

BENGALURU, 21 AUG

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi will on Thursday lay the foundation stone for a Electric Vehicle (EV) testing facility at the National Test House (NTH) in Bengaluru.

The facility will have equipment capable of conducting various tests on EV batteries, including electrical safety, electromagnetic compatibility (EMC), functional safety, durability, climate, and mechanical and material tests, an official statement said.

It will serve as a comprehensive centre for testing various aspects of EVs, ensuring that vehicles meet stringent quality standards before reaching consumers. This is expected to be a significant boon for southern India's EV manufacturers.

The National Test House, which operates under the aegis of the Department of Consumer Affairs, is a premier scientific organization that has been at the forefront of testing and quality assurance in various fields, including the Jal Jeevan Mission, Bullet Train project, Metro projects, and drone certification.

Pralhad Joshi *PHOTO: PTI*

In addition to the EV testing facility, the occasion will also see the NTH provide an OIML approved certificate, accepted worldwide, to Tatsuno India, a manufacturer of dispensing units for petrol pumps.The new EV testing facility is expected to further enhance the developing ecosystem of electric vehicles in India and provide vital support to the EV industry, contributing to the broader goals of environmental sustainability and innovation in automotive technology. *—PTI*

DKS says repair of Tungabhadra gate answered critics

BENGALURU/KOPPAL, 21 AUG

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Wednesday said quick and efficient repair of the damaged crest gate of Tungabhadra Dam has saved water and answered critics in a befitting manner.

"Criticisms die and good work lives on. The crest gate was repaired in just four days. Technicians, officials, engineers, workers, MLAs and district-in-charge minister burnt the midnight oil to fix the damaged crest gate at the dam," he said. "The government will honour each of them."

Asked if Tungabhadra Dam has a low lifespan, "There is no issue at all. Half a TMC of silt settle every year. (Industries Minister) MB Patil had spoken about it in the past. We will work on the Navali balancing reservoir as well. This project was included in the budget."

—Salar News

B'luru to host Enigma

BENGALURU, 21 AUG

Fans of Enigma in India can now listen to the iconic new age and world beat musical project, known for Gregorian chants-infused music, in India. The first-ever performance here is scheduled to be performed at Jayamahal Palace Grounds in Bengaluru on 5 October. "It will feature the original voices of Enigma – Andru Donalds, Angel X, and Fox Lima – along with a symphony orchestra, and a live ensemble of musicians and dancers," said Hitesh Mittal, who co-founded Indian Artists Collective, a platform bringing Indian and global artists perform live. Founded in the 1980s by German producer Michael Cretu, Enigma has captivated audiences worldwide with its unique blend of music styles, Gregorian chanting, ethnic psalms, church bells, organs atmospheric, and sometimes even psychedelic sounds.*—PTI*

8 scholars to get research grant of ₹15L

BENGALURU, 21 AUG

The Foundation for Indian Historical and Cultural Research (FIHCR), founded by historian Vikram Sampath, announces the launch of the Sir Jadunath Sarkar Fellowship for Indian History on Wednesday.

"By providing substantial support to emerging scholars, we aim to uncover new perspectives on our rich past and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of India's historical trajectory," said Sampath in a press release issued by FIHCR.

The fellowship, a key initiative of FIHCR, aims to nurture fresh scholarship on India's diverse past. The research initiative is also expected to encourage rigorous academic research across five distinct themes, ancient, medieval and modern Indian history, the freedom movement, and post-Independence Indian history, added the release.

Each year, through an open call for proposals, the foundation will offer fellowship, in collaboration with Ola Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Ola, to five to 10 deserving scholars, the statement said.

The fellowship is open to Indian nationals, including those abroad, and will offer Rs 15 lakh grant.

—PTI

FESTIVITIES BEGIN

Elephants begin journey to Mysuru for Dasara

MYSURU, 21 AUG

The first batch of nine dasara elephants, led by veteran Abhimanyu, lumbered out of Nagarahole Tiger Reserve at Veeranahosahalli in Hunsur taluk, Mysuru district, on Wednesday.

Mysuru District in-charge Minister HC Mahadevappa and Forest Minister Eshwara Khandre flagged off Gajapayana (the procession of elephants) after performing a puja.

The elephants were taken out on a procession for 2km from Veeranahosahalli forest department gate to Ashram School before transporting them on truck to Mysuru. The procession was followed by Veeragase, cultural dances by local tribal school students. All the nine elephants led by howdah carrying elephant Abhimanyu, Kanjan, Ekalavya, Bheema, Lakshmi, Varalakshmi, Rohith, Dhananjay and Gopi were decorated.

The elephants were taken out on a procession for 2km from Veeranahosahalli forest department gate to Ashram School before transporting them on truck to Mysuru on Wednesday *PHOTO: PTI*

By evening, the jumbos arrived in Mysuru city, heralding the Dasara season. They are camped at Aranya Bhavan in Mysuru till Friday and then will be brought to Mysuru Palace. The remaining five Dasara elephants will be brought from Bandipur forest camp later for training.

Minister Mahadevappa said the government initiated measures to empower 50,000 tribespeople living in the jungles of Mysuru and Chamarajanagar districts.

After releasing a handbook and felicitating mahouts, Forest Minister Khandre said the government will put up rail barricades across 200km in Bandipur and Nagarahole forests to prevent elephants from straying out of the forest. Chamundeshwari Electricity Supply Corporation Limited Chairman and MLA Ramesh Bandisiddegowda on Wednesday appealed to industrialists, members of chambers of commerce, industries, organisations, corporates and other stakeholders to sponsor the illuminations at Dasara.

—Salar News

Mangaluru jail opens nursery run by inmates

MANGALURU 21 AUG

The Mangaluru district jail's newly opened nursery is a unique blend of rehabilitation and green innovation.

It offers on sale a wide array of saplings grown by the inmates. The nursery was officially opened on Tuesday by Deputy Commissioner (DC) Mullai Mugilan. According to him, the journey began a few months ago when he visited the jail for an event and was struck by the sight of flourishing greenery within the prison walls. The meticulously cultivated plant fields, tended by the inmates, caught his attention, he said.

The DC then decided to facilitate a platform for the sale of these plants, and thus enabling the inmates to contribute to society in a meaningful way. The plant sale centre, situated right at the entrance of the jail, is a collaborative effort involving multiple departments such as the Municipal Corporation and Forest Department.

Speaking at the inauguration event, DC Mugilan said, "This sales centre is a step forward in encouraging such efforts, offering inmates a chance to engage in productive and transformative activities."

One of the inmates who took an active part in developing this nursery told PTI that the project is a reminder that even behind bars, there is room for growth, learning, and a second chance at life. Principal District and Sessions Judge Ravindra M Joshi presided over the inaugural function, commending the initiative as a model for prisoner rehabilitation.

The event was also attended by District Jail Superintendent BT Oblesappa and District Legal Service Authority Member Secretary Shobha BG

—PTI

Centre accords Z+ security cover to Sharad Pawar

NEW DELHI, 21 AUG

The Centre on Wednesday accorded the highest category of armed VIP security cover-Z plus- to Nationalist Congress Party (NCP-SP) chief Sharad Pawar, official sources said. The Union Home Ministry has asked the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) to extend the cover to the 83-year-old former chief minister of Maharashtra. A team of 55 armed CRPF personnel has been earmarked for the task. A threat assessment review by central agencies has recommended a strong security cover to Pawar. The Centre has accorded him a Z plus cover to be protected by the CRPF VIP security wing. A CRPF team is already in Maharashtra to take up the task. The VIP security categorisations is from highest Z+ followed by Z, Y+, Y and X. *—PTI*

Defence Minister to visit US from 23-26 Aug

NEW DELHI, 21 AUG

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will pay a four-day visit to the US beginning Friday to further boost the comprehensive global strategic partnership between the two countries. In Washington, Singh will hold talks with Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan among others. India's plan to procure 31 MQ-9B Predator drones, the proposed joint manufacturing of Stryker infantry combat vehicles and co-production of GE F414 engines in India are likely to figure prominently in Singh's talks with Austin, officials said Tuesday. Singh will chair a high-level roundtable meeting with the US defence industry on the ongoing and future defence collaborations. "The visit is expected to further deepen and broaden the India-US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership." *—PTI*

CBI may conduct polygraph on Ghosh

Hospital official moves HC, seeks ED probe

Leader of Opposition Suvendu Adhikari and others during a protest in Kolkata, on Wednesday *PHOTO: PTI*

KOLKATA, 21 AUG

CBI officers may conduct a polygraph test on Sandip Ghosh, the former principal of RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, where a woman doctor was allegedly raped and murdered earlier this month.

A former deputy superintendent of RG Kar Medical College and Hospital on Wednesday moved the Calcutta High Court, seeking an ED investigation against its ex-principal Sandip Ghosh, alleging financial irregularities by him during his tenure at the state-run facility.

Calcutta High Court on Wednesday adjourned till September 4 the joint hearing of several PILs over the alleged rape and murder of a doctor in RG Kar Medical College and Hospital and vandalism by miscreants at the institution since the Supreme Court is already seized of the matter.

The Kolkata Police has suspended three of its officers in connection with the vandalism at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital here last week, officials said.

The suspended policemen include two assistant police commissioners, they said.

A group of people had entered the medical facility and vandalised its emergency department, nursing station, and medicine store in the early hours of 15 August. *—PTI*

Protests singe streets, CBI grills Ghosh for 6th day

KOLKATA, 21 AUG

Protestors from across walks of life, who joined in solidarity with the ongoing junior doctors' agitation against the alleged rape and murder of the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital medic, on Wednesday took the streets of Kolkata and beyond by storm, even as public healthcare in West Bengal continued to remain sorely affected.

Senior doctors, nurses and wannabe medics from across medical colleges of the state, numbering a few thousand, conducted a march to the state health department headquarters, Shwasthya Bhavan, and laid siege to the premises till representatives of protestors met the department's top officials and submitted a memorandum.

Coming out of the meeting, the protesting doctors said they were "deeply disappointed" with the demeanour of the officials. CBI, meanwhile, grilled Sandip Ghosh for the sixth day.. *—PTI*

Lawyers boycott Badlapur accused

2 girls were allegedly raped in their school

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sushma Andhare and others during a protest, at Badlapur, in Thane, on Wednesday *PHOTO: PTI*

THANE, 21 AUG

Kalyan Bar Association in the district on Wednesday appealed to all its members not to accept the brief of the accused arrested in the Badlapur sexual abuse case.

A notice put up at the bar association office said the residents of Badlapur town had appealed lawyers not to defend the accused, and the bar association decided to respond positively.

Massive protests broke out in Badlapur, 53 km from Mumbai, on Tuesday after a school attendant was arrested for allegedly sexually abusing two kindergarten girls.

A local court on Wednesday extended till 26 August the police custody of the man arrested for allegedly sexually abusing two girls at a school in Badlapur town of Maharashtra's Thane district.

Badlapur school, where two young girls were allegedly sexually abused, preferred to cover up the crime instead of helping their parents file a police complaint, said Susieben Shah, chairperson of Maharashtra State Commission for Protection of Child Rights, on Wednesday.

The alleged crime by a male attendant created a volatile situation in the town of Thane district on Tuesday, with protesting parents and locals crippling rail services and clashing with police. *—PTI*

> **The protest was politically motivated because the protesters were not local residents. The local residents who were part of the protest could be counted on fingers**
>
> —Eknath Shinde, Maharashtra Chief Minister

'CCTV's MUST IN M'RASHTRA SCHOOLS'

MUMBAI, 21 AUG

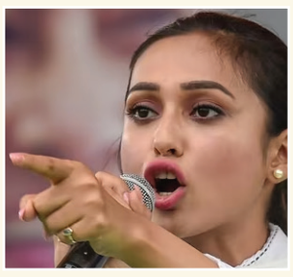
Following the incident of sexual abuse at a school in Badlapur, the Maharashtra government on Wednesday issued a directive to all the schools in the state to install CCTV cameras on their premises within a month.

The failure to comply with the order may result in severe consequences such as revocation of the permission to operate, said the order issued by School Education Minister Deepak Kesarkar.

Installation of a comprehensive CCTV camera network is a proactive measure to enhance the safety and security of students, teachers and staff, it said. *—PTI*

Ex-TMC MP Mimi gets rape threats for backing doctors' protest

Kolkata, 21 Aug



Former TMC MP and actor Mimi Chakraborty claimed that she has been receiving rape threats following her posts related to the ongoing protests over the rape-murder incident at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata. *—PTI*

Telangana man rapes 3-yr-old

Hyderabad, 21 Aug

A 30-year-old man from Uttar Pradesh was arrested for allegedly raping a three-year-old girl in Siddipet district of Telangana. The accused, a painter from Gorakhpur of UP, allegedly assaulted the girl on 19 August.

Mumbai: 3 cases of molestation

Mumbai, Thane, 21 Aug

A 48-year-old man was allegedly molested two minor girls. A 34-year-old woman was molested by a man on a skywalk in Kurla. An earring seller has been arrested for allegedly molesting an 8-year-old girl.

SIT to probe abuse of school girls in fake NCC camp: TN govt

Chennai, 21 Aug

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin has ordered constituting a Special Investigation Team to probe the incidents relating to the alleged sexual abuse of minor girls at a fake NCC camp in Krishnagiri district recently, the state government said on Wednesday. Senior IPS officer K Bhavaneeswari will lead the Special Investigation Team (SIT), which has been tasked by the CM to expedite the probe into the matter within 15 days and file charge-sheet within 60 days.

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Actor Vijay to introduce party flag on 22 Aug

CHENNAI, 21 AUG

Top Tamil actor Vijay, who heads Tamizhaga Vetri Kazhagam, will launch his political party's flag on Thursday. In a statement on social media platform X, he said he would unveil the flag and hoist it at the party office at Panaiyur near here and also introduce the flag song on Thursday. In February this year, Vijay had announced the launch of Tamizhaga Vetri Kazhagam and said he will be contesting the 2026 assembly polls in the state. His party did not support any political bloc in the just concluded Lok Sabha elections, where the DMK-led alliance swept the polls in Tamil Nadu. *—PTI*

Govind to take charge as Union Home Secretary

NEW DELHI, 21 AUG

Senior IAS officer Govind Mohan on Thursday will take charge as the new Union Home Secretary from Ajay Kumar Bhalla, who completes his five year tenure at the sensitive post, official sources said. A seasoned bureaucrat, Mohan was also the government's key officer during the Covid-19 pandemic and tasked with overseeing implementation of decisions taken for various protocols and ensuring smooth coordination with states. The EC had already announced three-phased polling in the Union Territory beginning 18 September. Meanwhile, senior IAS officer Sarada Muraleedharan will be appointed as the next Chief Secretary of Kerala, replacing incumbent V Venu. A 1990 batch IAS officer, Muraleedharan is currently serving as the Additional Chief Secretary (Planning). She is the wife of outgoing Chief Secratary Venu. *—PTI*

'Won't quit, open to floating new outfit'

Former Jharkhand chief minister and JMM leader Champai Soren arrives at his native village, on Wednesday *PHOTO: PTI*

RANCHI, 21 AUG

Former Jharkhand chief minister Champai Soren on Wednesday said he would not quit politics, asserting that an option to float a new political outfit was always open to him.

Chmapai said he was firm on his plans after "facing humiliation at the hands of leaders of JMM", a party to which the veteran leader claimed that he devoted his entire life. "It is a new chapter of my life. I won't quit politics as I have received lots of love and support from my followers. I had mentioned three options - quitting politics, organisation or friend. I will not quit politics. The chapter (of quitting politics) has closed, I may form a new outfit," the senior Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) leader said shortly after he reached his ancestral village Jhilingora.

"No one from JMM contacted me. This is the land of Jharkhand...I have struggled since my student life. I participated in the agitation for a separate Jharkhand state under the leadership of party supremo Shibu Soren," Champai said.

"Till Jharkhand Assembly elections, all options are open for me in this journey," he said. *—PTI*

Kharge & RaGa in J&K ahead of polls

JAMMU, 21 AUG

Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge arrived in Srinagar on Wednesday on a two-day visit to Jammu and Kashmir to take stock of the party's preparations for the upcoming assembly polls in the Union Territory and explore a likely alliance with the National Conference.

After wrapping up interactions here, Gandhi and Kharge will fly to Jammu to continue their interactions with the cadres of 10 districts in the Jammu region.

The two leaders are visiting the UT for key meetings in connection with the three-phased assembly elections beginning 18 September.

They are also likely to meet National Conference (NC) leadership to discuss a possible pre-poll alliance, party sources said.

Govts, must brainstorm on steps to ensure safe environment for women: Rahul

In the wake of the Badlapur sexual assault incident, Rahul Gandhi said it "forces us to think where are we heading as a society". He also said all governments and parties need to brainstorm on what steps should be taken to provide a safe environment for women.

He said that more efforts are made to hide a crime than to provide justice, and the biggest victims of this are women of weaker sections. *—PTI*

ASSAM TO TABLE MUSLIM MARRIAGE, DIVORCE BILL

NEW DELHI, 21 AUG

Assam government will introduce a bill in the upcoming Autumn Session of Assembly for compulsory government registration of marriage and divorce of Muslim people, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

Addressing a press conference after a cabinet meeting, Sarma said the government will table the Assam Compulsory Registration of Muslim Marriage and Divorce Bill, 2024 during the upcoming session, which will begin on Thursday.

Sarma also claimed that marriages of minors were also registered by the Kazis earlier, but the proposed bill will prohibit any such move. *—PTI*

Hema Committee report: UDF demands apology from Vijayan

T'PURAM, 21 AUG

Opposition Congress-led UDF on Wednesday rejected Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's claim that Justice Hema had herself requested that the expert panel's report on the film industry not be made public, calling it a 'blatant lie' and 'hypocrisy'.

Addressing a press conference here, opposition leader VD Satheesan said Justice Hema, who helmed the three-member panel, had never asked the government not to release it.

The Chief Minister tried to mislead everyone by telling lies, and his reply that the government had always been with the victims was nothing but "hypocrisy", he alleged.

The Leader of the Opposition also released the purported letter Justice Hema reportedly sent to the government.

Pinarayi Vijayan *PHOTO: PTI*

- The Leader of the Opposition also released the purported letter Justice Hema reportedly sent to the government and accused Vijayan of being hypocrite

Accusing the government of protecting the "hunters" for the last four and a half years after the panel submitted its report, he further charged that Vijayan's expectation was that the letter would never come out.

The direction of the apex court is not to disclose the names of victims, but it is not an obstacle to taking action on the report. "This is nothing new. This is not a bar to taking action on the report. There are references to incidents in the report that require prosecution even under Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act," Satheesan said. *—PTI*

FIRST MEETING

Parl panel to hold Wafq Bill meet today

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

Parliament's Joint Committee on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill will hold its first meeting today and its members are scheduled to interact with representatives of the ministries of minority affairs, and law and justice.

The 31-member committee, headed by BJP member Jagdambika Pal, has been tasked by the Lok Sabha to scrutinise the contentious bill, which has drawn protests from the Opposition parties and Muslim organisations.

The Bill is 1st major initiative from BJP-led NDA government *PHOTO: PTI*

The representatives from the minority affairs ministry are expected to brief the committee on the "amendments proposed on the Bill", the Lok Sabha secretariat said.

The Bill is the first major initiative from the BJP-led NDA government aimed at reforming the registration process for Waqf properties through a centralised portal.

It proposes several reforms, including establishing a Central Waqf Council alongside state Waqf Boards with representation to the Muslim women and non-Muslim representatives.

The Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha on 8 August and referred to a joint committee of Parliament after a heated debate, with the government asserting that the proposed law did not intend to interfere with the functioning of mosques and the opposition calling it a targeting of Muslims and an attack on the Constitution. *—PTI*

BJP LEADERS FILE NOMINATIONS

Clockwise from top left: BJP'S Union minister George Kurian from Madhya Pradesh, BJP leader Kiran Choudhry from Haryana, BJP's Union Minister of State Ravneet Singh Bittu from Rajasthan, and BJP leader Mamata Mohanta from Odisha filed their nominations forthe upcoming Rajya Sabha bypolls on Wednesday *PHOTOS: PTI/X*

PHOTO: PTI

2 die, 13 critical in Odisha spurious liquor case

BERHAMPUR, 21 AUG

Two of the 15 people receiving treatment at MKCG Medical College Hospital for consuming spurious country liquor died on Tuesday night, police said. The deceased was identified as Jura Behera, 60, from Jenapur near Chikiti. He was one of 20 people who fell ill after allegedly consuming adulterated liquor in Maoundpur village, located within the jurisdiction of K Nuagaon police station in Ganjam district, on Monday. Behera had been in the ICU since Monday night and had underlying health conditions, including diabetes and high blood pressure.. Meanwhile, the family members of the deceased and villagers staged a road blockade at Chikiti demanding compensation of Rs 20 lakh. *—PTI*

NSA invoked against man for thrashing tribal

INDORE, 21 AUG

The district administration in Madhya Pradesh's Indore has invoked the stringent National Security Act (NSA) against a miscreant arrested for publicly beating a 22-year-old tribal man and forcing him to tie his shoe laces, an official said on Wednesday. Accused Ritesh Rajput, 28, from an area under the Bhawarkuan police station limits, thrashed and tortured the tribal man on 18 August following a dispute over driving properly on the road, Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Rishikesh Meena said. The absconding co-accused in the case has been identified as Rohit Rathore and a search was on to nab him, he said. *—PTI*

HC extends interim protection of Khedkar till 29 Aug

NEW DELHI, 21 AUG

Delhi High Court on Wednesday extended the interim protection from arrest for suspended trainee IAS officer Pooja Khedkar. The extension remains in effect till 29 August. Former trainee IAS officer Puja Khedkar is accused of falsifying and misrepresenting facts in her application to the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC). The court had instructed the investigation agency not to arrest her while the matter is under consideration, noting that immediate arrest is not deemed necessary. Justice Subramonium Prasad of the Delhi High Court has deferred the hearing to 29 August. The deferral was due to the Delhi Police's reply not being filed on record yet. Senior Advocate Siddharth Luthra, representing Khedkar, also requested additional time to review the UPSC's response. *—ANI*

Pigeon fails to fly during I-day event in Ch'garh

RAIPUR, 21 AUG

A video of the Independence Day celebration in Chhattisgarh's Mungeli district, showing a pigeon released by a police officer failing to fly off, has gone viral, prompting the officer to demand action against those responsible. Some social media users promptly noticed that a similar situation unfolds in season 3 of popular web series 'Panchayat'. During the function, BJP MLA and former minister Punnulal Mohle who was the chief guest, Mungeli Collector Rahul Deo, and Superintendent of Police Girija Shankar Jaiswal were handed pigeons to release, signifying peace and freedom. The birds released by the MLA and the collector successfully flew off. However, when the SP released the pigeon, it fell to the ground. Official sources on Tuesday said the SP wrote a letter to the collector, seeking disciplinary action. *—PTI*

Heavy rains trigger flash floods in Tripura

At least 7 killed, thousands affected as houses, roads damaged; schools to remain shut today

People wade through floodwater during rain on the outskirts of Agartala, on Wednesday; Damaged road after massive landslide at Baluganj due to Monsoon rainfall, in Shimla, on Wednesday PHOTO: PTI

AGARTALA, 21 AUG

Over the past two days, heavy rainfall across various districts in Tripura has led to severe flooding in several parts of the state. Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha said that the administration is giving top priority to relief and rescue operations, working tirelessly to manage the situation.

The state government is regularly updating the central government on the evolving flood conditions, Saha said.

Initial reports indicate that the flooding has caused significant damage to homes, livestock, roads, electricity infrastructure, and agricultural crops. Joint efforts by the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), and local administration are in full swing to rescue citizens stranded by the rising waters.

Taking to X, CM Manik Saha shared, "In the last two days, heavy rains have caused flooding in various districts of the state. The administration is engaged in relief and rescue operations with the highest priority.

The state government is regularly informing the central government about the flood situation. It was initially reported that apart from the destruction of houses, livestock, roads, electricity and agricultural crops were also damaged."

He said that the joint initiative of NDRF, SDRF and local administration is in full swing to rescue the citizens at various places.

Earlier three members of the family were killed and one was injured after a landslide triggered by incessant rain in Devipur ADC village in Tripura on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, heavy to very heavy rainfall is expected to continue over Tripura for the next two days, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD). *—ANI*

Heavy rains lash parts of Kerala, R'than & U'khand

T'PURAM/ JAIPUR/ DEHRADUN, 21 AUG

Heavy rains and gusty winds lashed several districts of Kerala in the wee hours of Wednesday, uprooting trees that caused property damage, traffic snarls and power cuts in various parts of the state.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) predicted moderate to intense rainfall with winds gusting to 50 kmph in Idukki, Ernakulam and Thrissur districts during the morning hours.

Rajasthan

Monsoon activity continued in Rajasthan on Wednesday with heavy rains pounding many districts, including the capital Jaipur, in the last 24 hours, the meteorological department here said.

According to weather data in the past 24 hours till 8:30 am on Wednesday, some parts of western Rajasthan recorded rain, while some places in eastern Rajasthan witnessed rains along with thunderstorm.

Uttarakhand

A man died after being swept away in a swollen stream while another went missing in a separate incident in Uttarakhand on Tuesday evening as heavy rain late flooded water bodies in different "parts of the state, officials said.

Heavy overnight rain in more than half a dozen villages in the Dhuttu area of Tehri district damaged a house and led to the death of some livestock, the SEOC said. *—PTI/ ANI*

FOR REPRODUCTION

HC allows gamete extraction from critically ill husband

KOCHI, 21 AUG

Kerala High Court has come to the aid of a childless couple where the husband is critically ill, by permitting extraction of his gametes and cryopreserving them for use by his wife to undergo Assisted Reproductive Technology procedure for conceiving a child.

Justice VG Arun granted the interim relief on the wife's plea without the consent of her husband, a requirement under the Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) Regulation Act, as his medical condition was critical and was worsening day-by-day.

The wife had, in her plea, sought permission to extract and cryopreserve the gametes of her husband,

Her lawyers told the court that it was impossible to get informed written consent of the husband and if the matter was delayed any further, the worst may happen.

"Taking the above factors into consideration, and being guided by equity in the absence of an enabling statutory provision, I find the 1st petitioner (wife) to be entitled for the interim relief sought.

The court made it clear that other than extraction and preservation of the gametes, no further procedure under the ART Regulation Act shall be undertaken without its permission.

It listed the matter for further hearing on 9 September. *—PTI*

India's 2nd 700 MW nuclear plant starts full capacity ops

NEW DELHI, 21 AUG

India's second home-built 700 MW nuclear power reactor at Kakrapar Atomic Power Station (KAPS) in Gujarat on Wednesday started operating at its full capacity, the plant operator said.

The Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) said Unit 4 at KAPS had been operating at 90 per cent capacity before raising it to full power of 700 MWe.

The KAPS-4 unit achieved first criticality on 17 December last year and commenced commercial operations on 31 March.

PHOTO: PTI

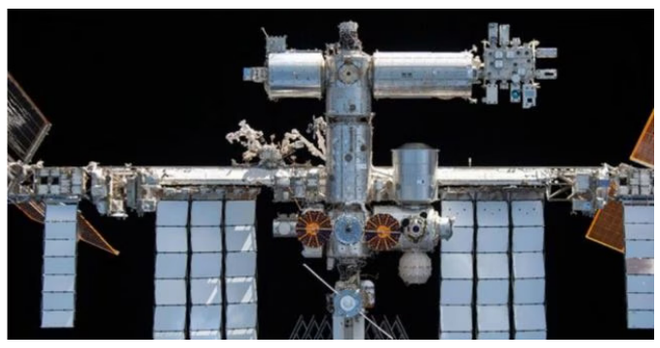
- The KAPS-4 unit achieved first criticality on 17 December last year and commenced commercial operations on 31 March

India is building 14 more 700 MW nuclear power reactors of the same design which are expected to commence operations progressively by 2031-32.

The NPCIL presently operates a fleet of 24 reactors with a total capacity of 8180 MW and has eight units with a capacity of 6800 MW under construction.

These are expected to be completed progressively, taking the installed nuclear power capacity in the country to 22480 MW by 2031-32, the NPCIL said. *—PTI*

Indian astronaut likely to fly to Int'l Space Station by April 2025



Two Indian astronaut-designates Group Captains Shubhanshu Shukla and Prashanth Balakrishnan Nair are undergoing training PHOTO: ANI

NEW DELHI, 21 AUG

An Indian astronaut is likely to fly to the International Space Station by April next year as part of the NASA-ISRO collaborative initiative, Science and Technology Minister Jitendra Singh said on Wednesday.

Two Indian astronaut-designates Group Captains Shubhanshu Shukla and Prashanth Balakrishnan Nair are undergoing training in the US for the Axiom Space Ax-4 mission. ISRO has assigned Shukla for the Ax-4 mission while Nair would be the back-up candidate.

The theme for the National Space Day is 'Touching Lives while Touching the Moon: India's Space Saga'. On the occasion, ISRO will release on 23 August the scientific data collected by the Chandrayaan-3 mission that could be used by researchers.

More than one thousand events have been organised across the country over the last two months.

The Chandrayaan-4 mission is expected to be launched in 2027 subject to approval from the government, he said, adding the aim of the mission was to bring back samples of lunar rock and soil to Earth. *—PTI*

TN HAS GARNERED RS 9.74L CR NEW INVESTMENTS: CM

CHENNAI, 21 AUG

Tamil Nadu has attracted investments worth over Rs 9 lakh crore in the last three years and generated 31 lakh new jobs, Chief Minister MK Stalin said on Wednesday.

Ahead of his visit to the United States next week to woo investors, Stalin on Wednesday unveiled a slew of new projects worth Rs 68,773 crore that would generate 1 lakh jobs in the state.

"This is a very important day in the industrial and development history of Tamil Nadu. It is a day to showcase our economic prowess to the world -- and a day to realise that Tamil Nadu has a bright future," the Chief Minister said at the Tamil Nadu Investment Conclave here.

The projects unveiled by CM include the inauguration of 19 new projects worth Rs 17,616 crore and laying the foundation stone for 28 different projects valued at Rs 51,157 crore, he said. The commitments made by companies include ones that Stalin received on his overseas trip to attract investments, those commitments received by companies between 2021 and 2023 and also those received during Global Investors' Meet held in January this year. *—PTI*

Two people and a biker, standing on the road, were also hit and dragged for several metres PHOTO: X/@Bashboysam

SUV drags man, rams car in Thane, 4 injured

THANE, 21 AUG

At least four people were injured after an SUV driver rammed his vehicle twice into another car in Maharashtra's Thane district on Tuesday following a family argument. A video of the incident has gone viral, and it showed a black-coloured SUV hitting another car in a busy road.

According to sources, the man driving the black SUV had an argument with his wife, after which other family members stepped in and decided to take the woman and the couple's child with them. Angered by this, the man rammed his car into the other SUV that had the woman and the child sitting inside.

Two people and a biker, standing on the road, were also hit by the black SUV as a result of the incident and dragged several metres.

The police have launched an investigation into the incident and the accused is yet to be arrested. *—Agencies*

Tripura man returns after 37 yrs in B'desh jails

AGARTALA, 21 AUG

A man from Tripura's Sepahijala district returned home after spending 37 years in Bangladesh jails.

Shahjahan returned to India through the Srimantapur land customs station with the assistance of BSF personnel.

Shahjahan, a resident of Rabindrangar, a border village in Sonamura subdivision, had gone to his in-law's house in Comilla, Bangladesh, in 1988. During his visit, police raided his relative's home and arrested him for illegally entering the neighbouring country, officials said.

"At the age of 25, I was sentenced to 11 years in prison by a court in Comilla. Despite completing my sentence, I was not released and spent an additional 26 years in custody, totaling 37 years before I was allowed to return home," Shahjahan told reporters.

The injustice faced by Shahjahan came to light a few months ago through media reports. His plight attracted the attention of the Zara Foundation, an organisation dedicated to helping immigrants who become trapped.

He also alleged that he endured brutal torture during his initial 14 days in police custody. *—PTI*

REALITY CHECK

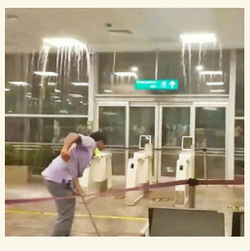
2024: A year of water leaks, infra collapse at airports

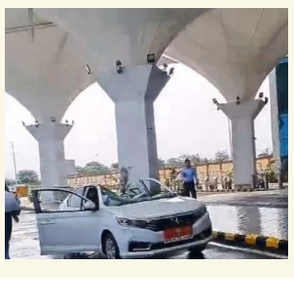
Guwahati, 31 March

- Amid heavy rain and storm, a portion of the ceiling of Lokapriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport in Guwahati collapsed.

Bengaluru, 10 May

- After heavy showers lashed Bengaluru, rainwater leaked through the Terminal 2 roof of Kempegowda International Airport.



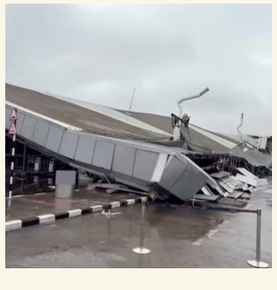


Jabalpur Airport, 27 June

- A section of the canpy at Jabalpur Airport that was inaugurated on 10 March in central India collapsed.

Delhi, 29 June

- Rajkot Airport, 29 June - A portion of the fabric canopy at the pick-up and drop area of Rajkot Airport collapsed after heavy rains.

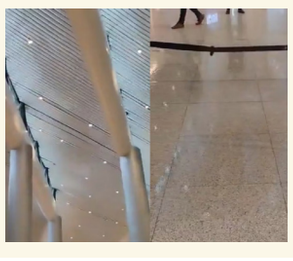


Lucknow Airport, 17 Aug

- A radioactive leak occurred at Chaudhary Charan Singh (Amausi) Airport in Lucknow.

Hyderabad, 19 Aug

- Water leaked through the roof of Hyderabad's RGI airport.



BHUJARIYA FESTIVAL

Transgenders take part in a procession on the occasion of Bhujariya festival, in Bhopal. The festival is celebrated in Madhya Pradesh and other parts of India on the second day of Raksha Bandhan, which is after the full moon of the month of Sawan month
PHOTO: PTI

KOLKATA HORROR

All I can do now is get her justice: Rape victim's father

People protest demanding justice for the trainee doctor who was raped and murdered at Kolkata's RG Kar College and Hospital, on Wednesday ***PHOTO: PTI***

The father of the trainee doctor murdered during a rest break at a Kolkata hospital has spoken of his daughter's love of medicine and the way her family had worked to support her vocation. "We are a poor family and we raised her with a lot of hardship. She worked extremely hard to become a doctor. All she did was study, study, study," he told the Guardian by telephone.

"All our dreams have been shattered in one night. We sent her to work and the hospital gave us her body. It's all finished for us.

"My daughter isn't coming back. I'm never going to hear her voice or laugh. All I can do now is concentrate on getting her justice," he said.

The rape and murder of the doctor at RG Kar hospital in Kolkata on 9 August, and subsequent handling of the case by the authorities, has led to protests and strikes by doctors across India.

Her father, who cannot be named under an Indian law that protects the identity of the dead woman, said a career in medicine was all his only child had ever wanted. The 31-year-old had beaten the odds to qualify for one of approximately 107,000 places in India's medical colleges, which more than a million aspiring doctors compete for every year.

She won a place at College of Medicine & JNM hospital in Kalyani in her home state of West Bengal. Her parents financed her dream with the precarious income her father earned as a tailor.

Remembering the day she confided in him she wanted to become a doctor, his voice broke. "She said: 'Papa, it's a good thing to become a doctor and help others. What do you think?' I said: 'OK, do it. We'll help you.' And look what happened," he said.

Her ambition drove him to expand his tailoring business and the family's finances improved to the point where, when his daughter fretted about safety on the hour-long bus ride between the hospital and their home in a crowded Kolkata suburb, he was able to borrow the money to buy her a car.

"At first, she told me to wait, she said we couldn't manage the EMIs [monthly instalments] and she didn't want to overburden us. But then she found the bus ride so tiring after a long shift that she agreed to the car," said the father. Although they remained in the same lower middle-class suburb where she grew up, and where everyone respected her as a local girl made good, her parents had recently renovated the house. The brass nameplate bore her name, not theirs, proudly prefixed by "Dr". The sense of disbelief in the neighbourhood has not faded since the news spread from house to house that "their" doctor's bright day was done.

The location of this attack – in the hospital where the victim worked, which she and her family assumed was safe – and her public service as a doctor working a 36-hour shift have added to the public outrage over the crime.

The father said: "Like all parents, we worried about her safety but only while she was travelling. The moment she reached the hospital, we relaxed. She was safe. It's like when we used to drop her off at school – once she was inside the gate, you feel she is safe," he said.

In a post on X, the head of the Indian Medical Association, Dr RV Asokan, expressed anguish at the murder, saying "we failed her in life but did not fail her in death" – a reference to the protests, outcry and doctors' strikes that have rocked the country since her body was discovered.

Her colleagues and neighbours describe a dedicated young doctor who wanted to pay off her parents' debts and give them a comfortable life after their sacrifices to help her become a doctor.

One of her former teachers, Arnab Biswas, said that unlike many young people who chose medicine for its earning potential, she was "old school", treating it as a vocation.

Having witnessed Covid-19 patients gasping for breath, she selected respiratory medicine when it came to choosing a medical specialism.

Her parents are broken. "She was my only child. We worked hard to make her a doctor … I will never be happy again," a neighbour said the mother told her. Neighbours, who consulted her over every ailment and were proud of her achievements, recall her feeding stray animals and gardening when she had the time. They are yearning to help the family in some way. "The girl has gone now," said one neighbour. "But we'll stand by her parents so they don't feel alone."
Courtesy, *—The Guardian*

LETTERS Write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR ساڈھ

The chaos of 'overtourism' in the summer of 2024

The World Travel and Tourism Council projected in April that 142 of 185 countries would generate $11.1 Trillion globally ***PHOTO: PTI***

The doorbell to Martinho de Almada Pimentel's house is hard to find, and he likes it that way. It's a long rope that, when pulled, rings a literal bell on the roof that lets him know someone is outside the mountainside mansion that his great-grandfather built in 1914 as a monument to privacy.

There's precious little of that for Pimentel during this summer of "overtourism."

Travelers idling in standstill traffic outside the sun-washed walls of Casa do Cipreste in Cintra sometimes spot the bell and pull the string "because it's funny," he says. With the windows open, he can smell the car exhaust and hear the "tuk-tuk" of outsized scooters named for the sound they make. And he can sense the frustration of 5,000 visitors a day who are forced to queue around the house on the crawl up single-lane switchbacks to Pena Palace, the onetime retreat of King Ferdinand II.

"Now I'm more isolated than during Covid," the soft-spoken Pimentel, who lives alone, said during an interview this month on the veranda. "Now I try to (not) go out. What I feel is: angry."

This is a story of what it means to be visited in 2024, the first year in which global tourism is expected to set records since the coronavirus pandemic brought much of life on Earth to a halt.

Wandering is surging, rather than leveling off, driven by lingering revenge travel, digital nomad campaigns and so-called golden visas blamed in part for skyrocketing housing prices.

Cue the violins, you might grouse, for people like Pimentel who are well-off enough to live in places worth visiting. But it's more than a problem for rich people.

"Not to be able to get an ambulance or to not be able to get my groceries is a rich people problem?" said Matthew Bedell, another resident of Sintra, which has no pharmacy or grocery store in the center of the UNESCO-designated district. "Those don't feel like rich people problems to me."

Overtourism generally describes the tipping point at which visitors and their cash stop benefitting residents and instead cause harm by degrading historic sites, overwhelming infrastructure and making life markedly more difficult for those who live there.

Look a little deeper and you'll find knottier issues for locals and their leaders, none more universal than housing prices driven up by short-term rentals like Airbnb, from Spain to South Africa.

The summer of 2023 was defined by the chaos of the journey itself — airports and airlines overwhelmed, passports a nightmare for travelers from the US. Yet by the end of the year, signs abounded that the Covid-19 rush of revenge travel was accelerating. In January, the United Nations' tourism agency predicted that worldwide tourism would exceed the records set in 2019 by 2 per cent. By the end of March, the agency reported, more than 285 million tourists had travelled internationally, about 20 per cent more than the first quarter of 2023.

The World Travel and Tourism Council projected in April that 142 of 185 countries it analysed would set records for tourism, set to generate USD 11.1 trillion globally and account for 330 million jobs.

Aside from the money, there's been trouble in paradise this year, with Spain playing a starring role in everything from water management problems to skyrocketing housing prices and drunken tourist drama.

Protests erupted across the country as early as March, with thousands of people demonstrating in Spain's Canary Islands against visitors and construction that was overwhelming water services and jacking up housing prices.

Japan set records for tourist arrivals. In Fujikawaguchiko, a town that offers some of the best views of Mt Fuji, leaders erected a large black screen in a parking lot to deter tourists from overcrowding the site. The tourists apparently struck back by cutting holes in the screen at eye level. Air travel, meanwhile, only got more miserable, the US government reported in July.

Tourism is surging and shifting so quickly, in fact, that some experts say the very term "overtourism" is outdated.

"There's been backlash against the business models on which modern tourism has been built and the lack of response by politicians," he said in an interview. Tourism "came back quicker than we expected," he allows, but tourists aren't the problem. "So what happens when we get too many tourists? Destinations need to do more research."

Virpi Makela can describe exactly what happens in her corner of Sintra. Incoming guests at Casa do Valle, her hillside bed-and-breakfast near the village center, call Makela in anguish because they cannot figure out how to find her property amid Sintra's "disorganized" traffic rules that seem to change without notice.

"There's a pillar in the middle of the road that goes up and down and you can't go forward because you ruin your car. So you have to somehow come down but you can't turn around, so you have to back down the road," says Makela, a resident of Portugal for 36 years. "And then people get so frustrated they come to our road, which also has a sign that says `authorized vehicles only.' And they block everything."

A 40-minute train ride to the west, Sintra's municipality has invested in more parking lots outside town and youth housing at lower prices near the center, the mayor's office said. It's not enough, say local residents, who have organised into QSintra, an association that's challenging City Hall to "put residents first" with better communication, to start.

They also want to know the government's plan for managing guests at a new hotel being constructed to increase the number of overnight stays, and more limits on the number of cars and visitors allowed.
—AP

WHY IS MODI VISITING UKRAINE AFTER RUSSIA?

Kyiv is due to welcome Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on August 23, on the eve of Ukrainian Independence Day, and just over a month after Modi visited Moscow. His visit is sure to envoke mixed feelings among his Ukrainian hosts. India has persevered in maintaining close ties to Russia despite the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, at the cost of significant irritation to Kyiv and its allies.

While Modi has called for peace, he has also refused to directly hold the Kremlin responsible for the war.

This was also illustrated during Modi's trip to Russia in July and his meeting with President Vladimir Putin, which coincided with Moscow's deadly attack on a Ukrainian children's hospital.

The Indian Prime Minister responded with a carefully worded comment.

"When innocent children are killed, the heart bleeds and that pain is very terrifying," Modi said at the time.

First visit of Indian leader to Ukraine in decades

In turn, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy described Modi's visit to Russia as a "disappointment."

"It is a huge disappointment and a devastating blow to peace efforts to see the leader of the world's largest democracy hug the world's most bloody criminal in Moscow on such a day," Zelenskyy wrote online.

Now, Modi is set to make his first visit to Ukraine since the war began in February 2022, and the first visit by an Indian leader to Ukraine for about 30 years. "India has substantive and independent ties with both Russia and Ukraine and these partnerships stand on their own," Tanmaya Lal, Secretary (West) at the Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) told reporters during a media briefing on Monday.

India wants peace talks

Experts say that this visit is a balancing act for India, which also gives New Delhi a chance to urge peace negotiations.

But Indian diplomacy has to maintain a difficult balance.

"Russia is a long-term traditional ally and Ukraine also has had very friendly relations with India.

It is a difficult task to manage this, especially because Ukraine has received strong support from the West, with which India also has good relations," Rajiv Bhatia, former Indian ambassador, and a distinguished fellow at the Gateway House think tank, told DW.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to express gratitude towards the Ukrainian government for their help in evacuating Indian students after the war broke out ***PHOTO: ANI***

"India wants to expand, consolidate and maintain its ties with Russia," he said, adding that New Delhi was not concerned that the Kyiv visit could jeopardize India's relations with Moscow.

Tiptoeing between US, Russia, China

Military, trade and diplomatic ties between Russia and India already run deep.

India purchases over 40% of its oil and 60% of its armaments from Russia, and also imports significant amounts of coal, fertilizer, vegetable oil and precious metals.

The fact that Russia is being shunned by the West over the Ukraine invasion is working in India's favor, as it motivates Moscow to pursue even closer ties. Also, New Delhi is wary that alienating Moscow could push Russia closer to China, which is India's major rival in Asia.

- Complicating the geopolitical calculation even further, the US and other Western countries are irritated by Modi's Russia-friendly stance and by his meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin

Complicating the geopolitical calculation even further, the US and other Western countries are irritated by Modi's Russia-friendly stance and by his meeting with Putin.

However, the West also doesn't want India to lose this influence in Moscow, as India could serve as a counterbalance to China when trying to sway the Kremlin.

What will Modi do in Kyiv?

"India will try to project itself as a peacemaker and engage in humanitarian assistance," Amit Julka, an assistant professor of International Relations at Ashoka University, told DW.

"Despite India's closeness to the US, there are undercurrents of suspicion. The Ukraine visit will also serve as damage control in terms of the optics. While it enjoys close ties with Russia, India does not want to alienate the West," Julka said.

India's Foreign Ministry said that New Delhi would not unveil a peace plan in Kyiv, but India was ready to support the negotiation of a peace settlement.

What else is on the agenda?

Apart from Russia's war on Ukraine, there are several other items on that Modi will likely discuss with Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. "Defence and economic cooperation, and the role of India in the eventual rebuilding of post-war Ukraine will also be discussed," said former ambassador Bhatia.

"Modi is also likely to express gratitude towards the Ukrainian government for their help in evacuating Indian students after the war broke out," he added.

Before the full-scale war in Ukraine, India had about 19,000 students enrolled in Ukrainian universities. Following the Russian invasion in February 2022, India, Ukraine and Poland worked together to evacuate most of them in a push dubbed "Operation Ganga."

—DW News

Indian doctor held in US for taking pics of naked kids

WASHINGTON, 21 AUG

A 40-year-old Indian doctor was held in a US jail on a USD 2 million bond after being charged with multiple sex crimes for allegedly recording hundreds of nude images and videos of children and women over several years, according to media reports. Oumair Aejaz was arrested earlier on August 8 after he allegedly placed hidden cameras in a variety of settings from bathrooms, changing areas, hospital rooms, and even his own home where he would record children as young as 2 years old in varying states of undress. Authorities became aware of his offences after his wife came forward with disturbing materials. Several search warrants have been served since Aejaz was arrested on 8 August at his home. *—AP*

Australia greenlights $19B solar project

NEWCASTLE, 21 AUG

An ambitious plan to build a massive solar farm in remote northern Australia that would transmit energy by submarine cable to Singapore is a step closer after the Australian government granted environmental approvals for the USD 19 billion project Wednesday. Australian company Sun Cable plans to build a 12,400-hectare solar farm and transport electricity to the northern Australian city of Darwin via an 800km overhead transmission line, then on to large-scale industrial customers in Singapore through a 4,300km submarine cable. The Australia-Asia PowerLink project aims to deliver up to six gigawatts of green electricity each year. *—AP*

Houthis target commercial ship in Red Sea

DUBAI, 21 AUG

A commercial ship traveling through the Red Sea came under repeated attack Wednesday, leaving the vessel "not under command" in an assault suspected to have been carried out by Yemen's Houthi rebels, the British military said. Few details were immediately available about the attack, though it comes during the Houthis' months long campaign targeting ships over the ongoing Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip. The attack saw men on small boats first open fire with small arms some 140 kilometers west of the rebel-held Yemeni port city of Hodeida, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center (UKMTO) said. Three projectiles also hit the ship, it added. It wasn't clear if that meant drones or missiles. *—AP*

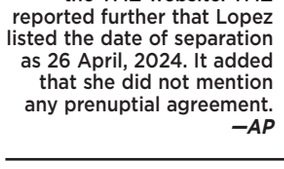


PHOTO: X

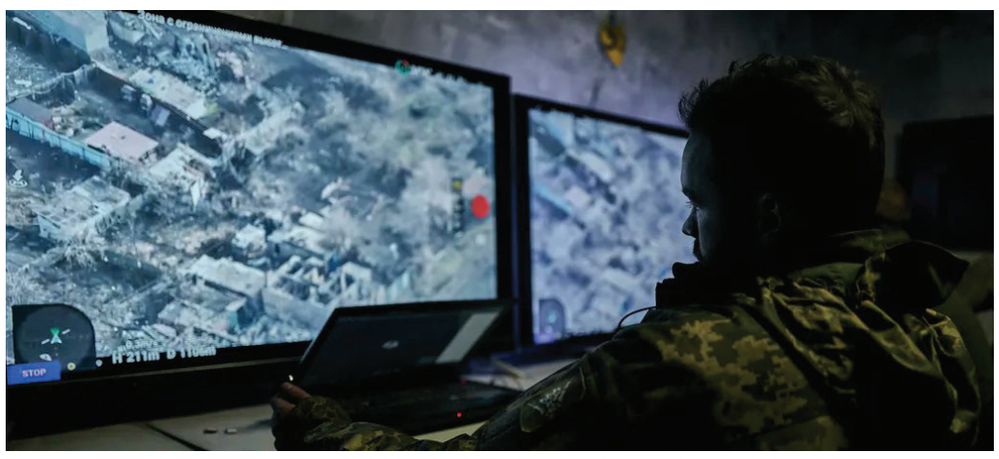
Jennifer Lopez files for divorce from Ben Affleck

LOS ANGELES, 21 AUG

After a relationship that spanned two decades, two engagements, two weddings and headlines too numerous to count, Jennifer Lopez has filed for divorce from Ben Affleck. The filing Tuesday in Los Angeles brought to an apparent end a celebrity coupling — or at least the second installment of it — that dazzled from the very heights of the pop culture firmament and emblazoned countless tabloid covers. The pair became known, even before such power-couple portmanteaus were ubiquitous, as "Bennifer." Court records showed Lopez filed the petition Tuesday in Los Angeles Superior Court. The news was first reported by the TMZ website. TMZ reported further that Lopez listed the date of separation as 26 April, 2024. It added that she did not mention any prenuptial agreement. *—AP*

Kyiv targets Moscow in largest drone attacks

Meanwhile, Russia's Ministry of Defence says it destroyed 45 Ukrainian drones overnight



The drone attacks come as Ukrainian forces are continuing to push into Russia's western Kursk region

PHOTO: X@AJENGLISH

MOSCOW, 21 AUG

Moscow came under one of the largest attacks yet by Ukrainian drones since the start of fighting in 2022, Russian authorities reported Wednesday, saying they destroyed all of those headed toward the capital.

Russia downed 45 Ukrainian drones overnight, the Ministry of Defence said. It said 11 were destroyed over the Moscow region, 23 over the Bryansk region, six over Belgorod, three over Kaluga and two over Kursk.

"This was one of the biggest attempts of all time to attack Moscow using drones," Moscow Mayor Sergey Sobyanin said on his Telegram channel. He said strong defenses around the capital made it possible to shoot down all the drones before they could hit their intended targets.

Some Russian social media channels shared videos of drones apparently being destroyed by air defense systems, which then set off car alarms.

Alexander Bogomaz, the Governor of the Bryansk region, which borders Ukraine, reported a "mass" attack on his region but that 23 drones were destroyed.

Ukraine has targeted oil refineries and airfields in an attempt to weaken Russia's fighting potential, and also has targeted the capital several times.

The drone attacks come as Ukrainian forces are continuing to push into Russia's western Kursk region.

The daring incursion into Russia has raised morale in Ukraine with its surprising success and changed the dynamic of the fighting. *—AP*

Ukraine bans Russian Orthodox church

KYIV, 21 AUG

Ukraine has adopted a law to ban religious groups linked to Moscow in a move targeting the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which the government has accused of complicity in Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. "This is a historic vote. Parliament approved a legislation which bans a branch of the aggressor country in Ukraine," she wrote on Telegram. Ukrainians are Orthodox Christians but the faith has split between the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC), and independent Orthodox Church of Ukraine.

Courtesy, Al Jazeera

Russian President Vladimir Putin inspects Chechen troops and volunteers readying to fight Ukraine ***PHOTO: X@RUSSIANPROPX***

Putin makes surprise visit to Chechnya after 13 years

MOSCOW, 21 AUG

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov have inspected Chechen troops and volunteers preparing to fight in Ukraine in Putin's first visit to the North Caucasus region since 2011.

The surprise trip comes as Moscow fights to push Ukrainian forces out of its Kursk region two weeks after they crossed the border in the largest invasion of Russia.

"As long as we have men like you, we are absolutely, absolutely invincible," Putin told soldiers at the Russian Special Forces University, a training school in Chechnya's Gudermes, according to a transcript on the Kremlin's website. Kyiv's incursion across its northern border has been an embarrassment for Putin and his army, even as Russian forces continue their steady advances on the front line in eastern Ukraine. *—Courtesy, Al Jazeera*

US PREZ ELECTIONS

Former President Barack Obama with former first lady Michelle Obama during the Democratic National Convention in Chicago ***PHOTO: PTI***

Yes, she can: Barack Obama praises Kamala

CHICAGO, 21 AUG

Americans are ready for a "better story" with Kamala Harris as their president, Barack Obama has asserted, as he made a forceful case for her, saying they don't want "four more years of bluster and bumbling and chaos" under her opponent Donald Trump.

Former president Obama, in his speech to the Democratic National Convention Tuesday night, remembered choosing his former vice president, Joe Biden, 16 years ago and recognised his friend's accomplishments as Biden passed the torch to his running mate, Harris.

"America is ready for a new chapter. America's ready for a better story. We are ready for a President Kamala Harris. And Kamala Harris is ready for the job," Obama said amidst applause from the audience. "History will remember Joe Biden as a president who defended democracy at a moment of great danger. I am proud to call him my president, but even prouder to call him my friend. Now the torch has been passed. Now it's up to all of us to fight for the America we believe in," Obama, the first black American president, said in his prime-time address to the convention.

> **America, Hope is making a comeback. Kamala Harris is more than ready for this moment. She is one of the most qualified people ever to seek the office of the presidency**
>
> -Michelle Obama, former first lady

He also levied personal attacks, calling Trump a "78-year-old billionaire who has not stopped whining about his problems since he rode his golden escalator nine years ago." *—AP*

'Biden approves nuclear plan'

President Joe Biden approved a classified document in March directing US forces to get ready for potential coordinated nuclear confrontations involving Russia, China and North Korea. The document is classified to a degree that no electronic versions available.

Courtesy, Anadolu Agency

Trump campaigns to 'make America safe again'

HOWELL, 21 AUG

Former President Donald Trump pledged to "Make America Safe Again" while campaigning in Michigan as the Democrats who gathered in Chicago to nominate Kamala Harris branded him a career criminal.

As part of a battleground campaign swing designed to counter the Democratic National Convention, Trump stood alongside sheriff's deputies in the city of Howell and tarred Harris, a former San Francisco district attorney and California attorney general, as the "ringleader" of a "Marxist attack on law enforcement" across the country.

"Kamala Harris will deliver crime, chaos, destruction and death," Trump said in one of many generalizations about an America under Harris. "You'll see levels of crime that you've never seen before. ... I will deliver law, order, safety and peace."

Trump has sought in recent weeks to blunt the enthusiasm that Harris has attracted since President Joe Biden ended his reelection campaign and endorsed her. That has involved both dark predictions about what electing Harris would mean for the country and efforts by Trump's advisers to set up events where he can try to draw specific policy contrasts. On Tuesday in Michigan, the subject was crime and public safety. *—AP*

Protesters clash with police in Chicago

CHICAGO, 21 AUG

More than a dozen pro-Palestinian demonstrators were arrested Tuesday during a protest that began outside the Israeli consulate and spilled out onto the surrounding streets on the second night of the Democratic National Convention.

The intense confrontations with officers began minutes into the demonstration, after some protesters - many dressed in black, their faces covered - charged at a line of police that had blocked the group from marching. Officers carrying wooden clubs shouted "move" and penned some demonstrators in on the street. *—AP*

Activists scuffle with officers outside the Israeli Consulate ***PHOTO: X/ ARMANDO L SANCHEZ***

PHOTO: IRANIAN STATE TELEVISION

BUS CRASH IN IRAN KILLS AT LEAST 28 PAK PILGRIMS

TEHRAN, 21 AUG

A bus carrying Shiite pilgrims from Pakistan to Iraq crashed in central Iran, killing at least 28 people, an official said Wednesday.

The crash happened Tuesday night in the central Iranian province of Yazd, said Mohammad Ali Malekzadeh, a local emergency official, according to the state-run IRNA news agency.

Another 23 people suffered injuries in the crash, 14 of them serious, he added. He said all the bus passengers hailed from Pakistan.

There were 51 people on board at the time of the crash outside of the city of Taft, some 500 kilometers southeast of the Iranian capital, Tehran.

Iranian state television later broadcast images of the bus, turned upside down on the highway with its roof smashed in and all its doors open. Rescuers stepped gingerly through the broken glass and debris littering the road.

In the state TV report, Malekzadeh blamed the crash on the bus brakes failing and a lack of attention by its driver. *—AP*

Hezbollah fires over 50 rockets at Golan Heights

JERUSALEM, 21 AUG

Lebanon's Hezbollah has launched more than 50 rockets, hitting a number of private homes in the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights.

The attack on Wednesday came a day after US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with fellow mediators Egypt and Qatar as he pressed ahead with the latest diplomatic mission to secure a cease-fire in the war in Gaza, even as Hamas and Israel signaled that challenges remain.

Hamas in a new statement called the latest proposal presented to it a "reversal" of what it agreed to previously and accused the US of acquiescing to what it called "new conditions" from Israel. There was no immediate US response.

PHOTO:X/ @TARIQTRAMBOO

First responders in Golan Heights said they treated a 30-year-old man who was moderately wounded with shrapnel injuries in Wednesday's attack. One house was engulfed in flames, and fire fighters said they prevented a bigger tragedy by stopping a gas leak.

Blinken ends latest visit without a cease-fire

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken ended his ninth visit to the Middle East since the war in Gaza began without securing a cease-fire deal, warning on Tuesday that "time is of the essence" even as Hamas and Israel signalled that challenges remain.

After meetings in fellow mediating countries Egypt and Qatar, Blinken said that because Israel has accepted a proposal the focus turns to doing everything possible to "get Hamas on board". There has been added urgency to reach a deal after the recent targeted killings of militant leaders of Hamas and Hezbollah in Iran and Lebanon, both attributed to Israel. *—AP*

MANHUNT ON

Suspected serial killer escapes from custody in Kenya

NAIROBI, 21 AUG

A manhunt is under way in Kenya after the escape from a Nairobi police cell of a man police claim had confessed to murdering 42 women after dismembered bodies were found in a quarry.

Collins Jumaisi Khalusha, 33, described by police as a "vampire, a psychopath" after his arrest on 15 July, broke out on Tuesday morning along with 12 undocumented Eritrean migrants.

Khalusha had appeared in a court in the Kenyan capital on Friday, when the magistrate ordered him to be held for 30 more days to enable police to complete their investigations. *Courtesy, Al Jazeera*

SEARCH OPS ON

Yacht that sank off Sicily was celebrating tech magnate's acquittal

PORTICELLO, 21 AUG

Police divers resumed searching for six people believed trapped in the hull of a superyacht that sank in deep seas off Sicily, including a British tech magnate who was celebrating his recent acquittal on fraud charges with the people who had defended him at trial.

The luxury sailboat, off Porticello near Palermo, was some 50 metres underwater — far deeper than most recreational divers are certified for and a depth that requires special precautions. Recovery crews could only stay for 12-minute shifts, a measure that slowed their efforts to reach the cramped inside of the wreck.

Fire rescue officials have said the six other passengers will be considered missing until they are located in the wreckage. They include tycoon Mike Lynch, who was once hailed as Britain's king of technology and was cleared in June of fraud and conspiracy charges in a US federal trial related to Hewlett Packard's USD 11 billion takeover of his company, Autonomy Corp.

Also unaccounted for are Christopher Morvillo, one of Lynch's lawyers, and Jonathan Bloomer, a chairman at Morgan Stanley International and the former head of the Autonomy audit committee who testified in Lynch's defence. The outing was intended at least in part as a celebration of Lynch's acquittal and a "looking forward to what was coming next," said Reid Weingarten, a Washington attorney and a member of Lynch's defense team who was not on the yacht.

The divers hadn't been able to access the below-deck cabins because they were blocked by furniture that had shifted during the violent storm. Luca Cari, a Spokesman for the rescue teams, said the search was proceeding much more slowly than another big shipwreck in Italy, the 2012 Costa Concordia cruise ship that flipped on its side off Tuscany's coast, because of the depth of the wreck and the limited space divers have to maneuver.

Some of the people who stood by Lynch throughout the ordeal were on board, including Morvillo, the lawyer, who Weingarten worked with. *—AP*

Officials said the six passengers will be considered missing until they are located in the wreckage. (Inset: Mike Lynch) ***PHOTOS: X@MVALDESDELEON/ WIKIPEDIA***

Rupee plunges 14 paise to 83.91 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 21 AUG

The Indian rupee nosedived 14 paise to 83.91 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday amid unabated outflow of foreign capital and volatile domestic equity markets. Forex traders said a weak American currency and lower level of crude prices, however, cushioned the local unit at lower level. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened weak at 83.79 and touched the intraday low of 83.94 against the greenback. The unit finally settled at 83.91 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a loss of 14 paise from its previous days' closing level of 83.77. The rupee settled 10 paise higher at 83.77 against the American currency on Tuesday, a day after gaining 8 paise. Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, said the rupee declined on recovery in US dollar index and US treasury yields. "FII outflows also weighed on the rupee. However, weak crude oil prices cushioned the downside." —*PTI*

Gold remains flat at ₹74,150/10g; silver falls ₹150/kg

NEW DELHI, 21 AUG

Gold prices remained flat at Rs 74,150 per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity had jumped Rs 1,400 to settle at Rs 74,150 per 10 grams in the previous session on Tuesday. However, silver prices declined Rs 150 to Rs 87,000 per kilogram against Rs 87,150 per kg in the previous close. Meanwhile, gold of 99.5 per cent purity also remained flat at Rs 73,800 per 10 grams. In the global market, Comex gold is trading at USD 2,544.50 per ounce, down by USD 6.10 per ounce. "Gold... still holding to trade above USD 2,500, after surging to fresh all-time highs on Tuesday amid the expectation of rate cuts from the US Federal Reserve," said Mohammed Imran, Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas. —*PTI*

Odysse Electric to expand operations to 150 cities by Sept

MUMBAI, 21 AUG

City-based electric two-wheeler maker Odysse Electric on Wednesday said it plans to expand its operations to over 85 more cities in the country by September this year to cater to the rising demand. The company currently has its presence in 65 cities pan-India and with the addition of another 85 cities across new and existing states the total number will grow to 150 by the second quarter of FY25, the company said. The company's upcoming expansion will increase its footprint in key locations across 17 states, it said, adding its electric scooters will now be available in Haryana and Punjab as well along with existing markets including Bihar, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, among others. —*PTI*

Shriram Properties to triple revenue to ₹3,000 cr by FY27

BENGALURU, 21 AUG

Realty firm Shriram Properties Ltd (SPL) said the company is targeting to triple its revenue to Rs 3,000 crore on Wednesday. Also, they hinted that they want to double the sale bookings to Rs 5,000 crore by 2026-27 financial year as the company embarks on its next phase of growth. SPL, one of South India's leading real estate developers, has unveiled a brand transformation initiative, as part of its ambitious growth strategy. According to a press release, the Company has entered its 25th year of operations in 2024-25, and as part of the celebration, SPL has embarked on a new brand identity today. The effort is aimed at asserting its own identity as a mature corporate having earned the reputation over 25 years of operations, while benefiting from the visionary oversight of its parent - the "Shriram Group". —*Salar News*

Amazon's India investments only to fill balance sheet losses: Goyal

He says growth of e-commerce is concerning as it hits retailers

NEW DELHI, 21 AUG

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Wednesday questioned Amazon's announcement of USD 1 billion investment in India, saying the US retailer was not doing any great service to the Indian economy but filling up for the losses it had suffered in the country.

He said that their huge losses in India "smells of predatory pricing", which is not good for the country as it impacts crores of small retailers. Launching a report on 'Net Impact of e-commerce on Employment and Consumer Welfare in India' here, the minister lambasted the e-commerce companies, questioning their business model that has been impacting small retailers in the country.

"When Amazon says that we are going to invest a billion dollars in the country, we celebrate, and we forget that the billion dollars are not coming in for great service or investment to support the Indian economy.

They made a billion-dollar loss in their balance sheet that year, they had to fill in that loss.

Piyush Goyal **PHOTO: PTI**

"And how did that loss get caused, they paid Rs 1,000 crores to professionals. I do not know who these professionals are...I would love to know, which chartered accountants, professionals or lawyers get Rs 1,000 crores unless you are paying all the top lawyers to block them so that nobody can fight a case against you," the minister said.

"Of course, I do not deny that technology will play its part, technology is a means to empower, to innovate, to meet consumer requirements, probably sometimes more efficiently, but we will have to see that it grows in an orderly fashion," he said. —*PTI*

Online vendors generated 15.8M jobs: Report

NEW DELHI, 21 AUG

Online vendors have generated 15.8 million jobs in India, including 3.5 million for women, with about 1.76 million retail enterprises participating in e-commerce activity, says a report released on Wednesday. The report 'Assessing the Net Impact of e-Commerce on Employment and Consumer Welfare in India' was launched by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal. "Plugging in data from our survey, we estimate that online vendors generate 15.8 million jobs, including 3.5 million jobs for women," the report prepared by Pahle India Foundation, a Delhi-based policy research institute, said. E-commerce, according to the report, has been a key driver of employment generation In India. On an average, online vendors employ 54 per cent more people and almost twice the number of female employees, compared to offline vendors. The report noted that two of the most widely-recognised contributions of e-commerce penetration in the retail sector are --growth in employment and improvements in consumer welfare. It said rather than displacing physical markets, e-commerce is expanding into new territories like tier 3 cities. —*PTI*

IF DOLLAR TERMS AT 12%

Economy can touch $55T by 2047: IMF executive director

KOLKATA, 21 AUG

Executive director at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Krishnamurthy Subramanian on Wednesday said that the size of the Indian economy has the potential to touch USD 55 trillion by 2047 if the growth rate in dollar terms remains at 12 per cent.

Speaking at a CII event here, Subramanian, the former chief economic advisor to the government from 2018 to 2021, said that inflation targeting since 2016 had helped the country average out the rate of price rise to five per cent. Before 2016, the average rate of inflation was 7.5 per cent, he said.

With a real growth of eight per cent, the nominal growth is expected to be 13 per cent with five per cent inflation rate, the economist said. "With rate of depreciation of the Indian currency to be less than one per cent vis-a-vis the dollar in the long run, the fundamentals of the economy will start to show up," he said.

In this context, Subramanian said that the real growth rate of India will be 12 per cent in dollar terms. According to him, then the size of the economy wills double every six years. "With the present size of the economy at USD 3.8 trillion, the possible size in 2047 could touch USD 55 trillion", he said.

Krishnamurthy Subramanian **PHOTO: PTI**

Subramanian said that it is possible for India to grow at eight per cent in real terms. According to him, in advanced economies, investments have been saturated where productivity improvement will be the only source of growth.

The other cause for the country could grow at eight per cent is due to a greater formalisation of the economy. At present, one-half to two-thirds of the Indian economy is still in the informal sector, he said. —*PTI*

Hyundai to build Hydrogen Centre at IIT-M campus

CHENNAI, 21 AUG

Automaker Hyundai Motor is set to establish a dedicated Hydrogen Innovation Centre at an investment of Rs 180 crore at the Thaiyur campus of Indian Institute of Technology, Madras for research in hydrogen technology.

During the Tamil Nadu Investment Conclave held earlier in the day in the city, Chief Minister MK Stalin laid the foundation stone for the facility, which is to come up on a 65,000 sq ft plot of land at the Thaiyur campus of IIT Madras, located on the outskirts of Chennai. The investment of Rs 180 crore has been earmarked towards the development and construction of the facility. The partnership between Hyundai Motor India Ltd., State government backed investment promotion agency Guidance Tamil Nadu and IIT Madras aims to accelerate hydrogen ecosystem development and adoption in the country.

PHOTO: PTI

The initiative is in line with Hyundai Motor India's goal of strengthening Tamil Nadu as a hub of automotive innovation and introducing advancements in the use of alternate fuels, a press release from IIT Madras said. "IIT Madras has continued to be the forerunner in India's transformation into a technology and innovation superpower.

The Hydrogen Innovation Centre would serve as a catalyst for hydrogen technology innovations, creating a robust ecosystem for startups and researchers, Kamakoti said. —*PTI*

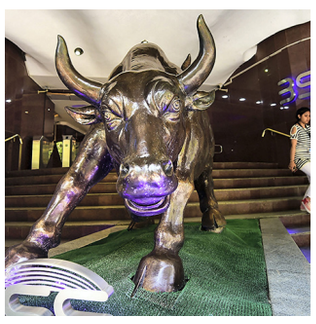
MARKET CLOSES AT 80K

Closing bell: Nifty 50 rises for 5th consecutive session

MUMBAI, 21 AUG

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty closed higher on Wednesday, helped by gains in FMCG, consumer durables and healthcare stocks amid strong buying support from domestic institutional investors.

However, recent foreign capital outflows amid a cautious trend in global equities ahead of the release of US Fed minutes restricted the gains in domestic markets, traders said. In a range-bound trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex gained for the second day in a row, rising 102.44 points or 0.13 per cent to close at 80,905.30. During the day, it rose 149.97 points or 0.18 per cent to hit an intra-day high of 80,952.83.



Sensex gained for the second day in a row, rising 102.44 points **PHOTO: PTI**

Rising for the fifth straight session, the NSE Nifty went up by 71.35 points or 0.29 per cent to end at 24,770.20. "The Indian market traded on a tight range with a positive bias supported by strong DII flows. While defensive sector outperformed due to a continued shift in portfolio towards FMCG, consumer, commodities, and pharma.

"Global markets exhibited a mildly cautious tone ahead of the release of the FOMC minutes later today. Currently, the expectation of a rate cut remains high, given the fall in US inflation and moderation in overall growth," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said. Among the Sensex firms, Titan, Asian Paints, ITC, Hindustan Unilever, Nestle India, Bajaj Finserv and Bharti Airtel were among the gainers.

In Asian markets, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong were closed in the negative territory while Seoul ended higher on Wednesday. The US stock markets settled lower in overnight trade on Tuesday. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

NMDC Steel's hot rolled coil production hits 1 MT-mark

NEW DELHI, 21 AUG

State-owned NMDC Steel Limited (NSL) on Wednesday announced producing 1 million tonnes of hot rolled coil (HRC) at its plant in Nagarnar, Chhattisgarh in a year's time.

NMDC Steel Ltd, an entity demerged and formed from mining firm NMDC, owns and operates the 3 million-tonne Nagar Steel Plant -- referred as India's youngest steel unit -- and has been set up with an investment of around Rs 23,000 crore.

"NSL announces a landmark achievement of its production capabilities. Today, this ultra-modern plant has successfully produced 1 MT HRC four days ahead of the first anniversary of commencement of HR coil production," the company said in a statement.

On 21 July, 2024, the company had achieved the production of 1.5 MT of hot metal from its blast furnace and produced 1 MT of liquid steel from the steel making shop (SMS) on 11 August.

Both milestones were reached in less than a year from the commencement of production, the company said.

The company's CMD Amitava Mukherjee said, "Achieving 1 MnT of Hot Rolled Coil (HRC) ahead of schedule is a testament to the dedication, expertise, and hard work of our entire dedicated team.

This achievement not only sets a new standard within the PSU sector, but also stand strong against industry benchmarks. We remain focused on sustaining this momentum and continuing to lead with quality and efficiency." —*PTI*

Tata Motors ties up with 2 firms to expand charging infrastructure for EVs

NEW DELHI, 21 AUG

Tata Motors on Wednesday said it has tied up with Delta Electronics India and Thunderplus Solutions to set up charging infrastructure for its range of electric commercial vehicles (CVs). As part of the MoU inked between the parties, 250 new fast-charging stations for electric commercial vehicles would be set up across the country.

Strategically located in and around over 50 cities, including Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Bengaluru, Pune, and Kochi, among others, these new charging stations will significantly increase the existing network of 540 commercial vehicle charging points, Tata Motors said in a statement.

Basis its understanding of the commercial EV movement, the commercial vehicle major will recommend optimal locations and nearest dealerships for setting up the fast-charging stations, the company said. E-commerce companies, parcel and courier service providers, among other industries, are increasing the adoption of commercial EVs for last-mile deliveries. PTI

These new charging stations will increase the existing network of 540 commercial vehicle charging points **PHOTO: PTI**

"Expanding the available charging infrastructure on high-use routes will encourage more customers to opt for electric commercial vehicles and improve vehicle uptime, resulting in higher revenues and better profitability, while contributing towards a cleaner, greener environment," Tata Motors Commercial Vehicles Vice President and Business Head -- SCV & PU -- Vinay Pathak said. —*PTI*

Gem, jewellery exports drop 21.9% in July: GJEPC

MUMBAI, 21 AUG

The overall gem and jewellery exports witnessed a 21.93 per cent year-on-year decline in July to USD 1,665.4 million (Rs 13,922.03 crore) on account of dampening of consumer demand following global unrest, Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC) has said.

According to data released by GJEPC -- the apex body for the gems and jewellery industry in India -- the overall exports in the category in July 2023 stood at Rs USD 2,170.71 million.

"The exports are mainly affected due to decline in demand following geopolitical disturbance in key markets like the US and China. The demand in the China market has drastically slowed down due to a struggling economy," GJEPC Chairman Vipul Shah told PTI.

PHOTO: PTI

The overall export of cut and polished diamonds (CPD) declined 21.34 per cent in July to USD 907.67 million from USD 1,174.41 million in the year-ago period.

Gold jewellery exports also witnessed a 10.53 per cent decline in July to USD 530.38 million compared to USD 603.12 million in the same period of last year. —*PTI*

OMNI-CHANNEL APPROACH

Decathlon to invest ₹932 cr in next 5 yrs

NEW DELHI, 21 AUG

French sports retailer Decathlon on Wednesday said it will invest Rs 933 crore in India, its one of the fastest growing markets, in the next five years to expand retail footprint and manufacturing operations.

The company expects its business to become double in next three to five years, said Decathlon India CEO Sankar Chaterjee. The company plans to have a network of 190 stores, having presence in over 90 cities in next 5 years as part of its expansion, he added.

Besides, a handful of this would also be spent on enhancing the digital channel as per the omni-channel approach of the company. Decathlon will expand its manufacturing operations and increase sourcing from india for the local market and its global operations.

The company plans to have a network of 190 stores across 90 cities in next 5 years as part of its expansion **PHOTO: PTI**

Currently 68 per cent of the goods sold in India are locally produced. Besides, 8 per cent of Decathlon's global product range are also met through India manufacturing. "We are aiming to take the domestic manufacturing for Decathlon India to 85 per cent by 2026," Chaterjee said.

- French sports retailer Decathlon on Wednesday said it will invest Rs 933 crore in India, its one of the fastest growing markets, in the next five years to expand retail footprint and manufacturing operations.

Decathlon plans to add 10-15 new stores every year, accelerating online sales and increasing local sourcing as part of expansion. Decathlon Global Chief Retail and Countries Officer Steve Dykes said India now plays an important role for the company.

Dykes further said Decathlon will explore new sales channels as B2B to increase its impact. —*PTI*

ICICI settles case with Sebi by paying ₹69.82L

NEW DELHI, 21 AUG

ICICI Securities has settled with market watchdog Sebi a case pertaining to alleged violation of regulatory norms after paying Rs 69.82 lakh.

A settlement application was submitted to Sebi in connection with the inspection of books and records for the merchant banking activities of the company, ICICI Securities said in a regulatory filing. The observations were primarily related to the due diligence process to be followed by the company as a merchant banker, it said. The company had submitted an application for settlement under Settlement Regulations in respect of the aforementioned matter with a view to avoid any protracted proceedings arising from Sebi's show cause notice, it said. Following the payment, a settlement order dated August 20, 2024 passed by Sebi has been received by the company on the same day, it added.

PHOTO: PTI

Meanwhile, ICICI Securities is seeking regulatory clearance for delisting from bourses. As per the scheme of arrangement, shareholders of ICICI Securities will get 67 shares of ICICI Bank for every 100 shares they hold. —*PTI*

Kerala announces Rs 2cr cash award for PR Sreejesh

T'PURAM, 21 AUG

The Kerala government on Wednesday announced a Rs two crore cash award for Indian hockey stalwart, PR Sreejesh. A Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan took a decision in this regard, a CMO statement said."Sreejesh, who was a member of the Indian hockey team that won a bronze medal in the 2024 Paris Olympics, will be given a cash award of Rs two crore," it said. Hailing from Kerala, Sreejesh bid adieu to the game following his starring role as a goalkeeper in the country's second consecutive Olympic bronze at the just-concluded Paris Games.—*PTI*

Pak reach 158-4 on 1st day of test against B'desh

RAWALPINDI, 21 AUG

Bangladesh pace bowlers made full use of favorable conditions on a greenish wicket before half centuries from Saim Ayub and Saud Shakeel rescued Pakistan to 158-4 on the opening day of the first cricket Test here on Wednesday. The tourists had Pakistan on the mat at 16-3 after wet patches on the outfield of Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium from early morning rain had delayed the toss for 4-1/2 hours. But left-handed opener Ayub, who hit 56, and vice-captain Shakeel, unbeaten on 57, shared an aggressive 98-run fourth wicket stand in almost two hours before seamer Hasan Mahmud (2-33) broke through in the final session and had Ayub caught in third slip. Ayub patiently saw off the early seam and swing of Bangladesh pace bowlers before striking four boundaries and a six in his 98-ball knock. Wicketkeeper-batter Mohammad Rizwan was 24 not out at stumps. —*AP*

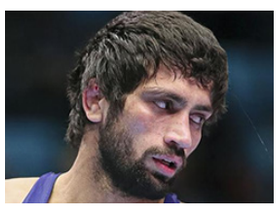


PHOTO: PTI

U17 Wrestling C'Ship: Dahiya wins Bronze in 110kg

AMMAN, 21 AUG

S India's Ronak Dahiya bagged the bronze medal in the 110kg Greco-Roman category at the U17 World Wrestling Championship here. In the bronze medal play-off, Ronak, currently ranked two in the world in his age-group weight category, comfortably disposed the challenge of Turkey's Emrullah Capkan 6-1 to claim India's first medal from the championship on Tuesday. Earlier, Ronak had lost to eventual silver medallist Zoltan Czako of Hungary in the semi-final. The gold in this category was won by Ukraine's Ivan Yankovskyi, who beat Czako 13-4 by virtue of technical superiority. India have a chance of a second medal in the 51 kg repechage if Sainath Pardhi wins two bouts. He is first pitted against Dominic Michael Munaretto of the United States and if he wins the bout then he will fight the bronze medal play off with either Kazakhstan's Mussan Yerassyl or Iran's Abolfazl Mehrdad Karamiegaei. —*PTI*

Swiatek ties with Henin with 117th week at the top

NEW DELHI, 21 AUG

Poland star Iga Swiatek topped the Women's Tennis Association (WTA) rankings yet again, which were issued on Tuesday, tying with Belgian great Justine Henin for spending 117 weeks overall at the top of the charts. The five-time Grand Slam champion has equalled with record set by Henin in the 2000s and is now tied at eighth place for total weeks spent at the top position since the computer rankings were introduced back in 1975. Swiatek can tie with Ashleigh Barty (in seventh place with 121 weeks) if she continues at the top for the next month or so. Only six players have spent more weeks at the top spot than Barty. —*ANI*

Intercontinental Cup: Manolo picks squad

No Jhinghan among India probable list

Indian players during practice session on Wednesday PHOTO: X/@INDIANFOOTBALL

NEW DELHI, 21 AUG

The Indian national team head coach Manolo Marquez on Wednesday announced a list of 26 probables for India's preparatory camp for the three-nation Intercontinental Cup to be held in Hyderabad during the FIFA Window from 3 to 9 September this year.

Syria, placed 93rd in the latest FIFA rankings, and Mauritius, who stand at 179, are the other two teams in the competition. India is currently ranked 124th. The preparatory camp will start in Hyderabad on 31 August, as per an All India Football Federation (AIFF) press release.

Announcing the probables, Marquez, India's new head coach said: "We are very excited about our first preparatory camp and I know it will be the same for the players."

"We face two different teams and the rankings are not very important. We need to work all together in the same direction to find the correct group of players and their predisposition will be very good, something I am completely sure about. I know all of us are in pre-season with nice challenges in front of us. It is a big honour to wear the jersey of the National Team and we need to show it for all our fans," added the coach. —*ANI*

PROBABLES LIST

GOALKEEPERS
Gurpreet Singh, Amrinder Singh, Prabhsukhan Singh Gills

DEFENDERS
Nikhil Poojary, Rahul Bheke, Chinglensana Singh Konsham, Roshan Singh Naorem, Anwar Ali, Jay Gupta, Ashish Rai, Subhasish Bose, Mehtab Singh

MIDFIELDERS
Suresh Singh Wangjam, Jeakson Singh, Nandhakumar Sekar, Naorem Mahesh Singh, Yasir Mohammad, Lalengmawia Ralte, Anirudh Thapa, Sahal Abdul Samad, Lallianzuala Chhangte, Lalthathanga Khawlhring.

FORWARDS
Kiyan Nassiri Giri, Edmund Lalrindika, Manvir Singh, Liston Colaco

FIXTURES

3 SEPTEMBER	6 SEPTEMBER	9 SEPTEMBER
India vs Mauritius	Syria vs Mauritius	India vs Syria

Indian team forced to train indoors due to heavy rain

KATHMANDU, 21 AUG

Incessant rain came in the way of the Indian team's preparations and forced its players to train indoors ahead of a vital match against Maldives in the U-20 SAFF Championship here on Friday.

The Indians were set to train at the ANFA Complex here on Wednesday, but rain played spoilsport and they had a training session at their hotel instead, with head coach Ranjan Choudhuri not willing to risk his players getting injured.

Team captain Ricky Meetei Haobam took in his stride the forced change in plans. "Such things are never in your control, so there's no point dwelling on them. If something does not go according to plan, we just have to keep positive and prepare for the next day, or the next activity. It's all in the mind," said Ricky.

India began their campaign with a 1-0 victory against Bhutan despite being reduced to nine men on Monday. However, Group B has been thrown wide open after a 10-man Bhutan defeated Maldives 2-1 on Wednesday.

The Blue Colts now have to avoid defeat against the Maldives to seal their semi-final spot. The India U-20 captain preferred to dwell on the positives. "Of course, we are here to be champions of SAFF. This is the first time I'm playing at the U-20 level, so things are a little different. Every country is improving bit by bit, but we are a strong side as well," he said. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

BCCI General Secretary Jay Shah; (Inset) Greg Barclay PHOTO: PTI

BCCI Secy Jay Shah to be named ICC Chairman

- The son of Union Home Minister Amit Shah can run the ICC for at least three years

NEW DELHI, 21 AUG

BCCI General Secretary Jay Shah is likely to be named as the Chairman of the International Cricket Council (ICC), according to reports.

Shah has acquired support from Australia and England, two of the key figures in international cricket, for nomination, the reports said. The son of Union Home Minister Amit Shah can run the ICC for at least three years.

In a video conference, incumbent chairman Greg Barclay said he intended to step down from his post. This comes amid a 4.46 billion dollar dispute between the governing body and its major broadcast rights holder Star, as reported by The Age.

"ICC chair Greg Barclay confirmed to the board that he will not stand for a third term and will step down from the post when his current tenure finishes at the end of November. Barclay was appointed as the independent ICC chair in November 2020, before being re-elected in 2022," an ICC spokesperson told The Age.

"Current directors are now required to put forward nominations for the next chair by 27 August, 2024, and if there is more than one candidate, an election will be held with the term of the new chair commencing on 1 December 2024," the ICC official added.

Jagmohan Dalmiya (1997 to 2000) and Sharad Pawar (2010-2012) are the only two Indians who have held the position of ICC's chief in the past. Shah's tenure as General Secretary of BCCI ends in 2025 following which he is obligated to enter a three-year cooling-off period.

To become the chairman of the ICC, the candidate has to garner at least nine votes out of the 16 which amounts to 51 per cent. —*Agencies*

Sinquefield Cup: D Gukesh draws with Nepomniachtchi

ST LOUIS, 21 AUG

World championship challenger Indian Grandmaster D Gukesh played out a thrilling draw with Russia's Ian Nepomniachtchi to be tied second after the second round of the Sinquefield Cup, the final event on the Grand Chess Tour this year.

After a relatively easy draw with reigning world champion Ding Liren of China, Gukesh had an exciting match against Nepomniachtchi out of a Catalan opening game on Tuesday.

The Indian stood marginally better for the major part as white pieces but Nepomniachtchi, who has won the Candidates' tournament twice, stayed put with some fine defense and counter-attacks to steer the game to a draw in the knight and pawns endgame. The game lasted 60 moves.

Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa also stayed

D Gukesh PHOTO: PTI

in the hunt after a draw with Maxime Vachier-Lagrave of France. The pieces got traded at regular intervals and the players arrived at a rook and pawns endgame that offered no chances. In the other game of the USD 3,50,000 prize money tournament, the all American duel between Wesley So and Caruana was also drawn. Firouzja remained in front with 1.5 points in his bag leaving eight players behind him on one point each. With a half point in his kitty, Caruana is currently at the bottom with seven rounds still remaining in the 10-player round-robin tournament. —*ANII*

EYE FOR 300TH WICKET

Border Gavaskar Trophy on par with Ashes for Aus: Starc

SYDNEY, 21 AUG

Australia pace ace Mitchell Starc believes that with the upcoming Border-Gavaskar Trophy against India becoming a five-Test affair for the first time in over three decades, it would be "right on par" with the esteemed Ashes series for his team.

The marquee series between India and Australia, set to begin in November, was extended by a match this year for the first time since the 1991-92 season.

"Being five matches now it's probably right on par with an Ashes series," Starc told Wide World of Sports.

Since 2014-15, Australia have failed to lay their hands on the Border Gavsakar Trophy, with India winning four consecutive series including the

Australia pace ace Mitchell Starc PHOTO: PTI

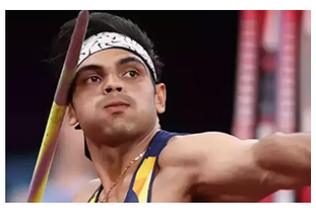
historic triumphs Down Under in 2018-19 and 2020-21.

Starc is not only intent on reversing this trend but also harbours aspirations of a clean sweep, particularly as the series forms a crucial part of the World Test Championship. "We always want to win every game at home and we know India are a very strong team," he said.

Currently, India leads the Wold Test Championships table with Australia in second place. "As we're placed at the minute we're the top two teams on the Test ladder... so a very exciting series coming up for the fans and certainly the players.

The 34-year-old is just 11 matches shy of reaching a milestone 100 Tests and has no plans to quit red-ball cricket.

"If it does come to a point where I'm lucky enough to get past that 100 number then it's obviously going to be pretty special as well," he said. Alongside, Test and ODI skipper Pat Cummins and Josh Hazlewood, Starc will shoulder the pace duties across three formats. —*PTI*



Neeraj Chopra PHOTO: PTI

Neeraj Chopra gears up for Diamond League title

LAUSANNE, 21 AUG

Two weeks after winning his historic silver medal at the Paris Olympics, star Indian javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra will resume action at the Lausanne Diamond League meeting on Thursday, seeking to reclaim the DL trophy at the season-ending finale next month.

Nursing a long-standing groin injury, Chopra claimed a silver in the Paris Olympics on August 8 with a 89.45m throw, having won a historic gold in the Tokyo edition of the Games three years ago.

The 26-year-old double Olympic medallist Indian on Saturday confirmed his participation at the Diamond League meeting in Lausanne, leaving a decision on a possible surgery after the end of the season.

Chopra was the Diamond League champion in 2022 and finished second behind Jakub Vadlejch of Czech Republic in the winner-takes-all DL final in Eugene, USA, last year. This season's DL finals will be held in Brussels on 14 September.

He needs to finish in the top-six of the Diamond League meetings series standings to qualify for the season finale. —*PTI*

Can see growth of women's table tennis, says Manika Batra

CHENNAI, 21 AUG

Indian table tennis is headed in the right direction thanks to the advent of the UTT tournament which attracts top players from across the world, feels Manika Batra, who is the most prominent face of the women's game in the country.

Manika and Sreeja Akula recently made history by becoming the first Indian table tennis players to reach the Olympics singles pre-quarterfinals in Paris.

Sharath Kamal, Manika Batra and others on Wednesday PHOTO: PTI

Next, the 29-year-old Manika will represent Bengaluru Smashers in the eight-team Ultimate Table Tennis (UTT) competition, which gets underway here on Thursday.

> **India has been constantly growing in the international arena, and we look forward to more growth**
>
> -Manika Batra, Table tennis player

"Personally, it has helped me because the players come for UTT from different countries, and we play against them, we play with them," Manika told reporters here on Wednesday.

"It's really fun, and we enjoy this. I can see the growth that's happening, especially in women's table tennis in India, how we all are performing internationally. We have improved a lot from UTT."

Manika lost to Miu Hirano of Japan 0-3 in the women's singles pre-quarterfinals in Paris. In the team event, India, who were represented by Manika, Sreeja and Archana Kamath, lost to Germany 1-3 in the quarterfinals. —*PTI*

ROW OVER KOLKATA RAPE

Reinstate fixtures in Kolkata: Chaubey to Didi

KOLKATA, 21 AUG

All India Football Federation (AIFF) President Kalyan Chaubey on Wednesday wrote to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, requesting her to ensure that the Durand Cup matches are held in the city as scheduled.

Fearing security concerns due to widespread protests after a trainee doctor's alleged rape and murder, the organisers had called off the Durand Cup derby between Mohun Bagan and East Bengal on 18 August.

Reigning champions Mohun Bagan and East Bengal are also not playing their quarterfinal matches at home. Mohun Bagan face Punjab FC in the quarterfinal in Jamshedpur

AIFF President Kalyan Chaubey PHOTO: PTI

on August 23 while East Bengal play against Shillong Lajong in Shillong later on Wednesday.

The Salt Lake Stadium is, however, scheduled to host the Bengaluru FC vs Kerala Blasters quarterfinal match on Friday.

The organisers are also yet

> **It feels some kind of a riot is going on here. It's very shameful and it's a complete failure of law and order in West Bengal that a football match could not happen heret**
>
> -Kalyan Chaubey, All India Football Federation (AIFF) President

to make any announcement on the venue for the semifinals (25 and 27 August) and final (31 August) which are slated to be held at the Salt Lake Stadium here.

"I have received numerous appeals from not just the supporters of participating teams but also football fans across the world requesting the reinstatement of the Durand Cup matches in Kolkata," Chaubey said in the letter.

"The Derby match between East Bengal and Mohun Bagan is regarded as one of the top five most famous derbies in the world. The Durand Cup, established in 1888, is the fourth oldest football tournament globally.

The decision to cancel the Bagan-East Bengal derby match was taken following a meeting between the Kolkata Police officials and organisers of the tournament. "As you are aware, the Durand Cup derby between Mohun Bagan and East Bengal, scheduled for Sunday (18th August 2024), had to be called off due to intelligence inputs indicating potential violence at the venue. —*PTI*

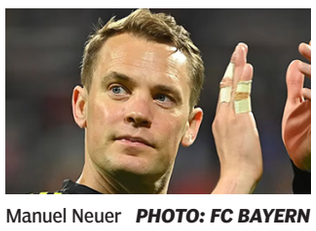
German's wall Neuer retires from int'l soccer

MUNICH, 21 AUG

Germany goalkeeper Manuel Neuer said Wednesday he is retiring from the national team after 15 years and 124 games. He is staying in club soccer with Bayern Munich.

The 38-year-old Neuer debuted for Germany in 2009 and won the World Cup in 2014. His last game for the national team was the 2-1 extra-time loss to eventual champion Spain in the quarterfinals as Germany hosted Euro 2024.

Neuer said he was "tempted" by the prospect of staying on for the 2026 World Cup in the United States, Canada and Mexico but decided against it after speaking with family and



Manuel Neuer PHOTO: FC BAYERN

friends. That could open the door for Barcelona's Marc-André ter Stegen to take over as Germany's starting goalkeeper.

Neuer is the second leading player in the German team to retire from international soccer this week after midfielder Ilkay Gündogan, who captained the team at Euro 2024. —*AP*